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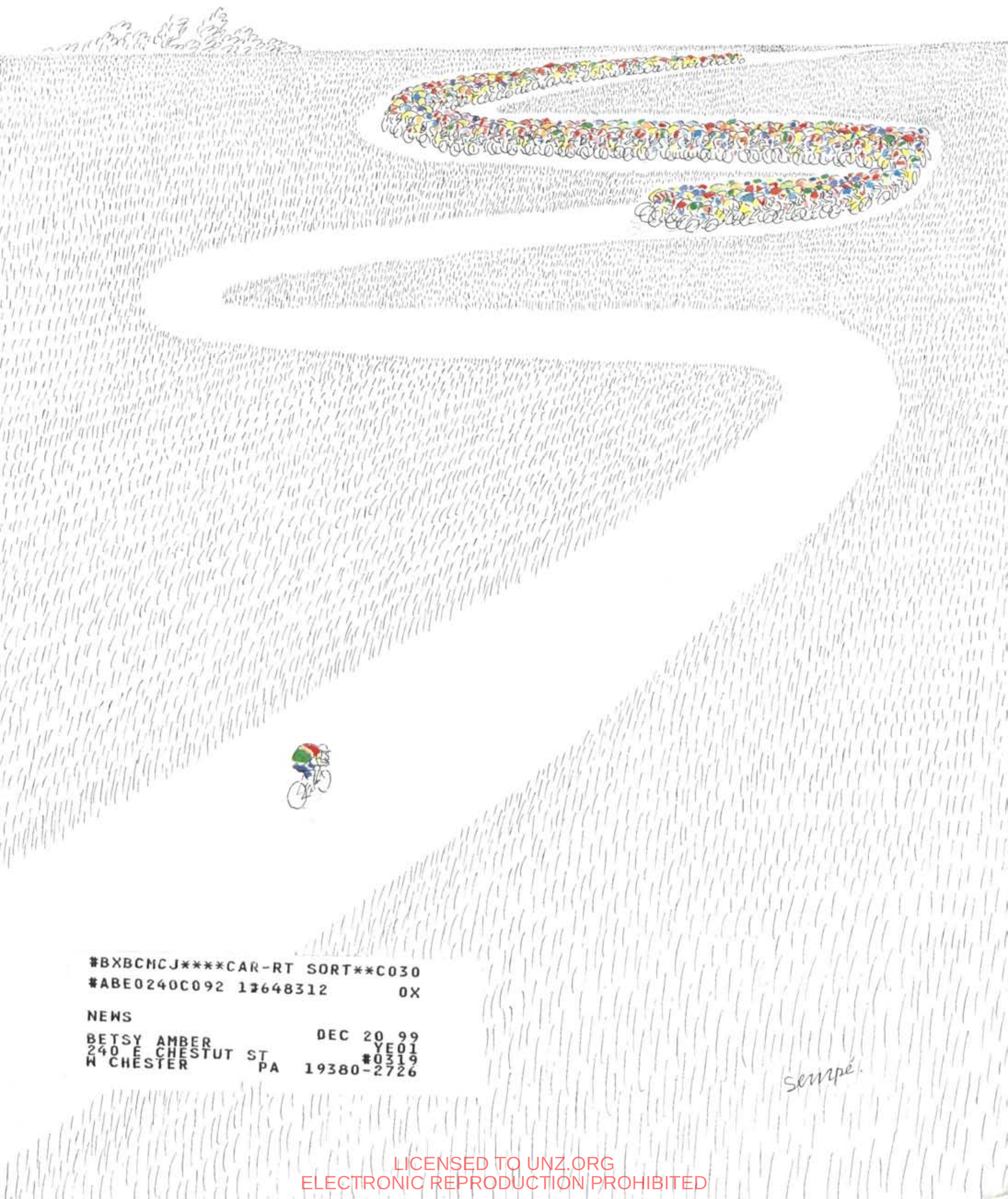

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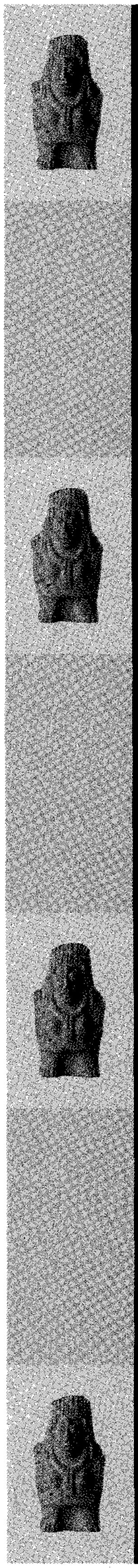

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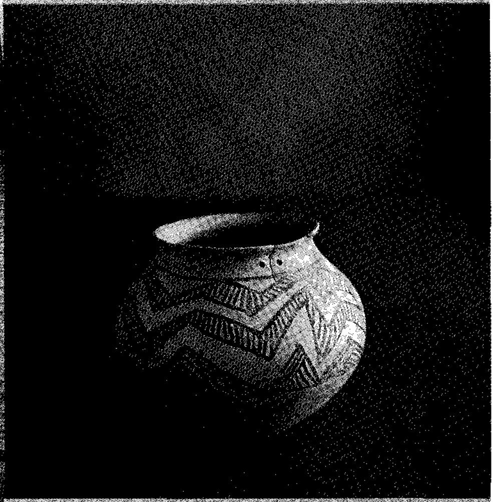

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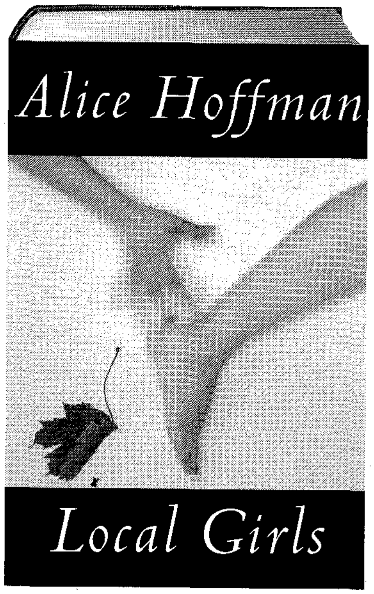

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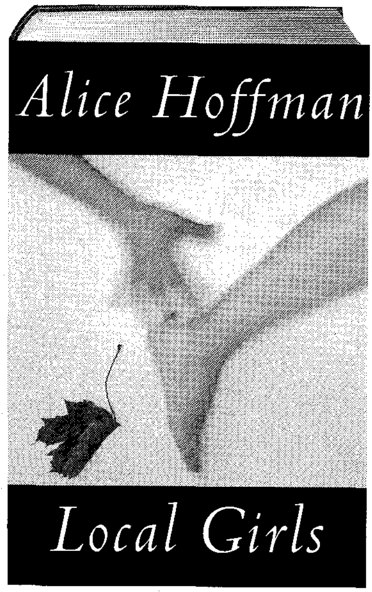

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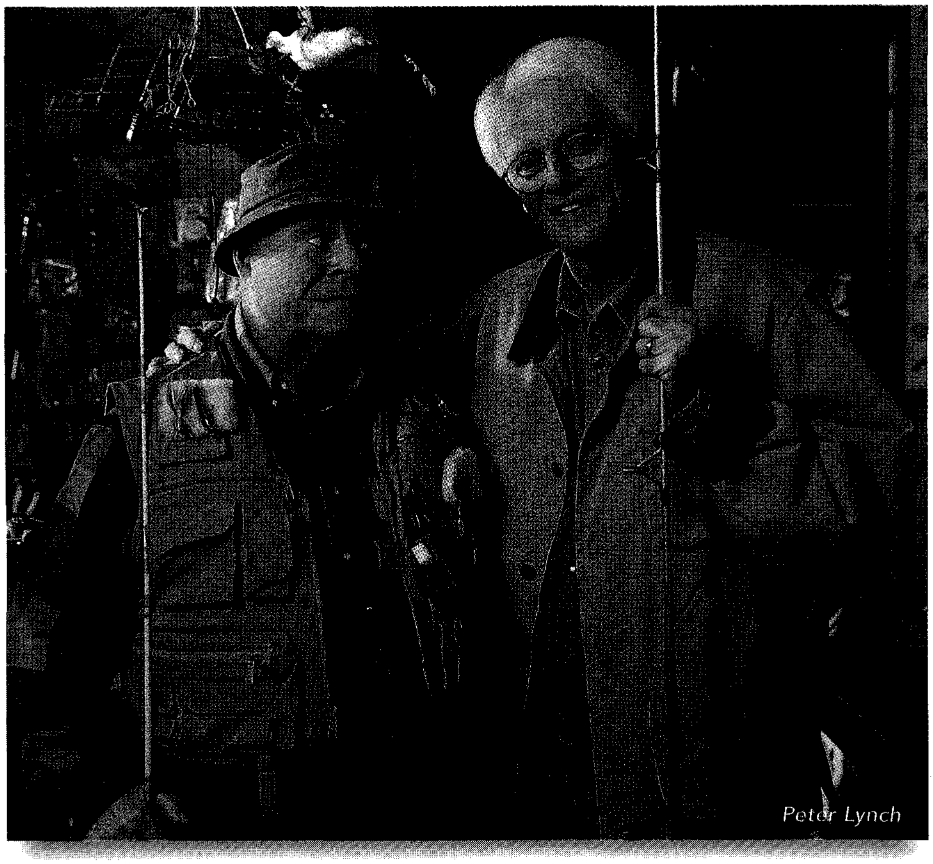

Peter Lynch

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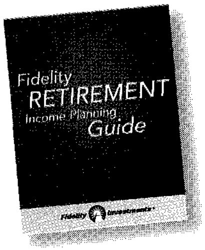

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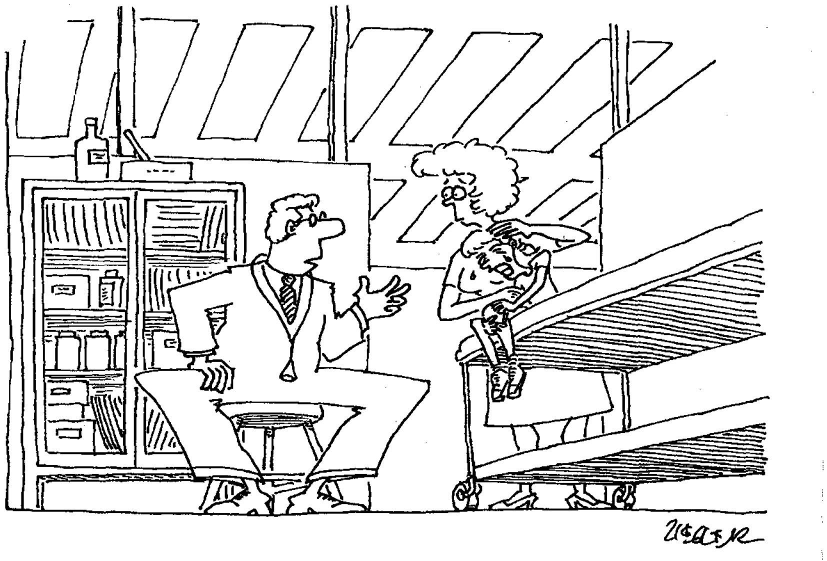

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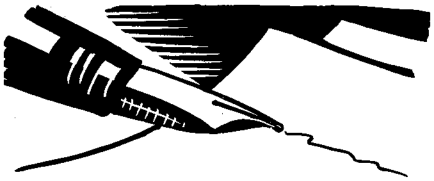

NEWSPAPERING IN MIAMI

I am the Miami *Herald* writer who is quoted in Mimi Swartz's article on the paper (Letter from Miami, "The *Herald's* Cuban Revolution," June 7th) as saying that "the only mail I get is from elderly white women." I meant the comment jocularly, and was sorry to see it appear in an article apparently aimed at blackguarding David Lawrence, the *Herald's* former publisher and a man who almost killed himself in working his utmost for the paper and the community.

Swartz's article was circumstantially accurate, situationally false: what happened to the *Herald*, as I told her, was that several top executives died and then Tony Ridder, the current chairman and C.E.O. of Knight-Ridder, took control of the paper and decided to pluck it like a goose for its eiderdown. The plucking continues apace. Newspapering is—or ought to be—Pentecostal first, profitable second. To blame David Lawrence in any way for the consequences of the corporate greed that pervades Knight-Ridder is deeply unfair.

Michael C. Browning
Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

The Miami *Herald*, as it is described by Mimi Swartz, has many similarities to the Jersey *Journal*, in Hudson County, New Jersey, where I worked for several years. Like Miami, Hudson County boasts a substantial Cuban population; like the *Herald*, the *Journal* has a Spanish-language supplement that frequently comes under fire for sensationalism and lack of objectivity. These criticisms fail to take into account the mind-set of the Cuban leadership. Having been barraged by pro-Castro propaganda from their homeland for so many decades, many Cubans view the media over which they have any influence as a necessary source of counter-propaganda. These readers aren't necessarily seeking "the truth." For them, simply hearing another, complementary truth can be a major accomplishment.

Eric Grode
New York City

How tiring to read yet another article in which Cuban-Americans are characterized as morally and ideologically bankrupt, and as foaming at the mouth without provocation. The story of the *Herald* is telling in that it shows how the Cuban-exile community has always been written off by the "respectable" American press.

Micaela Porta
New York City

RADIO DAYS

In "The Political Scientist" (June 7th), James Fallows writes that after recording a radio interview with Harold Varmus while he was riding his bicycle to work I "went back to the studio and rerecorded [my] questions from the comfort of a chair," so Varmus was heard to be panting while I was "easy-breathing." The implication is that I was trying to show Varmus up. Not so. Rerecording interviews is a no-no at National Public Radio. I used bits of my interview with Varmus—what are commonly described as "sound bites"—in a longer story, in which I interviewed other people as well. There were no "questions" of mine broadcast—just a spoken narrative, used much the way Fallows used text to link together quotes in his article. Varmus was the only one "on-mike" as we rode to his office, although, if you listen carefully, you can hear a wheezing reporter cycling behind Varmus and trying to keep up—a position in which Varmus has left many people, both on the bike and in the laboratory.

Joe Palca
Washington, D.C.

•

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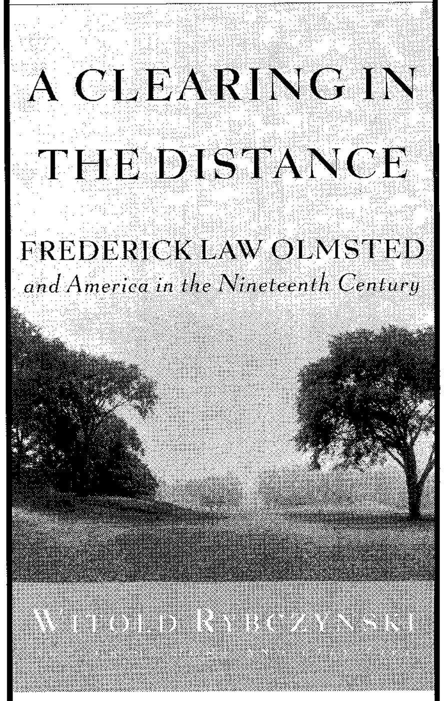

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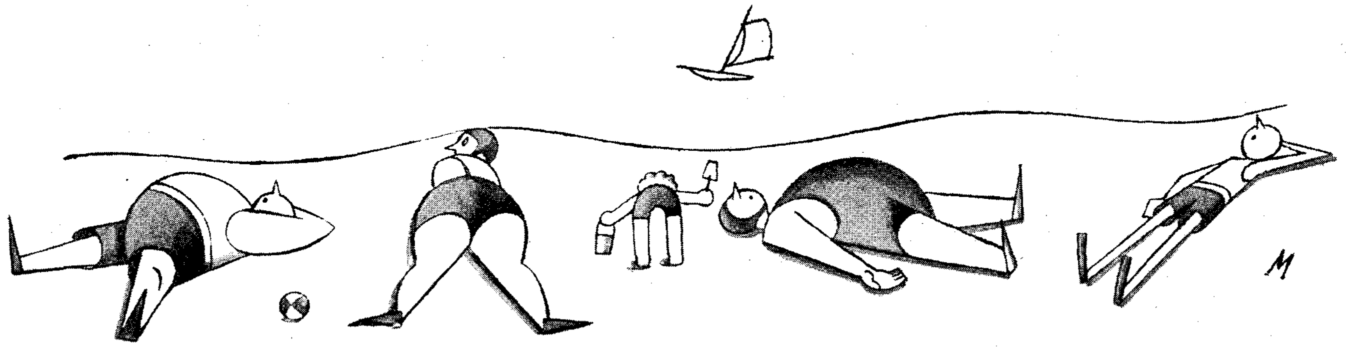

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THE THEATRE

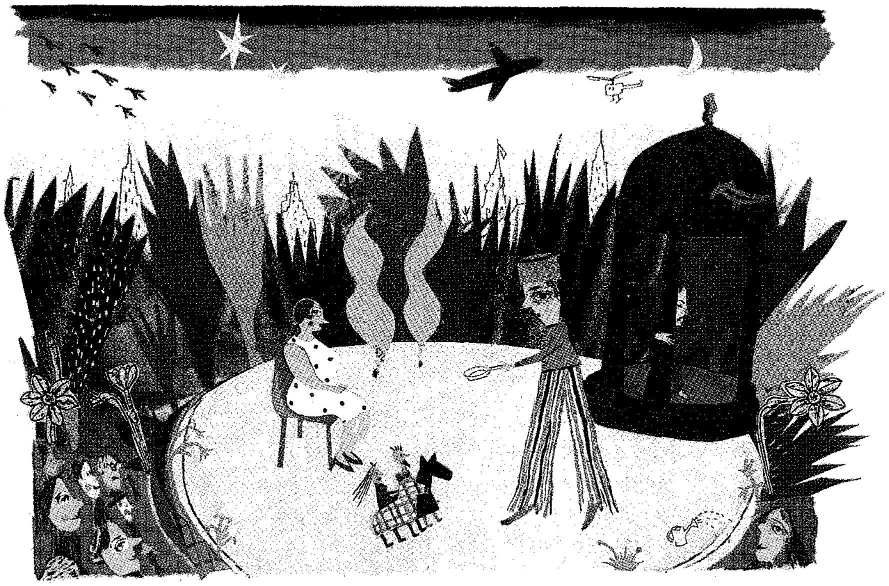
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

After the Fair—The York Theatre Company presents a musical based on the Thomas Hardy story "On the Western Circuit," with book and lyrics by Stephen Cole and music by Matthew Ward. In previews. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 239-6200.)

Automatic Earth—From 3-Legged Dog, a multimedia work written by Kevin Cunningham, in which a man with a brain injury explores the American landscape as a hurricane heads his way. Previews begin July 10. (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 645-0374.)

Emerging Artist Series—The first production in a new Performing Garage festival is Elliott Earls's "Eye Sling Shot Lions," an interactive work that examines contemporary mythology through video, sound, typography, and live spoken word. July 8-11 at 8. The series continues through July 25. (33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)



"The Taming of the Shrew," at Central Park's Delacorte Theatre.

Goodbye My Friduchita—Priscilla Lopez portrays the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, in a drama by Dolores C. Sendler. In previews through July 10. Opens July 12 at 8. (The Directors Company, 311 W. 43rd St. 712-7458.)

Ice Factory '99—Soho Think Tank's summer festival of new works begins with "Aijr Fist," a multimedia performance piece incorporating elements of myth, dreams, and Norwegian folklore. July 7-10 at 7. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 966-4844.)

I'm the One That I Want—The comedian Margaret Cho tells the story of her disastrous descent into Hollywood, as the first Asian-American to have her own sitcom. Preview on July 7. Opens July 8 at 8:30. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 307-4100.)

Richard III—Shakespeare in the Park(ing Lot), from Expanded Arts. Opens July 7 at 8 and runs through July 31. (Municipal Parking Lot at Broome and Ludlow Sts. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 253-1813.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Amy's View—Dame Judi Dench is an amazing actress, but can she keep you in your seat for the duration of another one of David Hare's pompous plays? (Just barely.) This one claims to be about the tangled relationship between an actress from theatre's golden age and her modern daughter, who marries an arbiter of pop culture, but it's really about Hare's out-of-touch ideas regarding how today's audiences view theatre—meaning him. Directed by Richard Eyre. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. Closes July 18.)

Angelique—A drama by first-time playwright Lorena Gale, about an African slave in Montreal in the seventeen-thirties. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes July 11.)

Annie Get Your Gun—A terrific revival of Irving Berlin's solid-gold score. It's played for romance and sass, which the vulnerable and charming Bernadette Peters and the hunky, easygoing Tom Wopat deliver in spades. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Bash—Calista Flockhart stars in a trio of one-acts by Neil LaBute examining the nature of evil. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Benten Kozo—Traditional Kabuki meets Jackie Chan in a terrific evening concocted by director Jim Simpson and his Bat Theatre Company. The work is based on Kawatake Mokuami's nineteenth-century play involving a princess, her missing fiancé, a master thief, and a priceless incense box; the company's hip updating of the script, along with Moe Schell's clever costumes, creates an ironic, funny, energetic production that (like many of the company's offerings in the past year) is well worth a trek to Tribeca. The show runs in repertory with Erin Courtney's dark comedy, "Mother's Couch," performed Fridays and Saturdays at 11 P.M. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 226-0051.)

Chicago City Limits—The improv company presents its latest revue, "Unlimited." (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)

Closer—Patrick Marber's slick dissection of the anatomy of desire follows four characters as they meet, mate, and move on in a kind of algebra of solitude which is factored out before our eyes. Marber can be very funny, and his writing is tight and well paced, but his staging is not. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/5/99.) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

A Couple of Blaguards—Michael T. Judd and Mickey Kelly perform Frank and Malachy McCourt's two-man autobiographical show. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

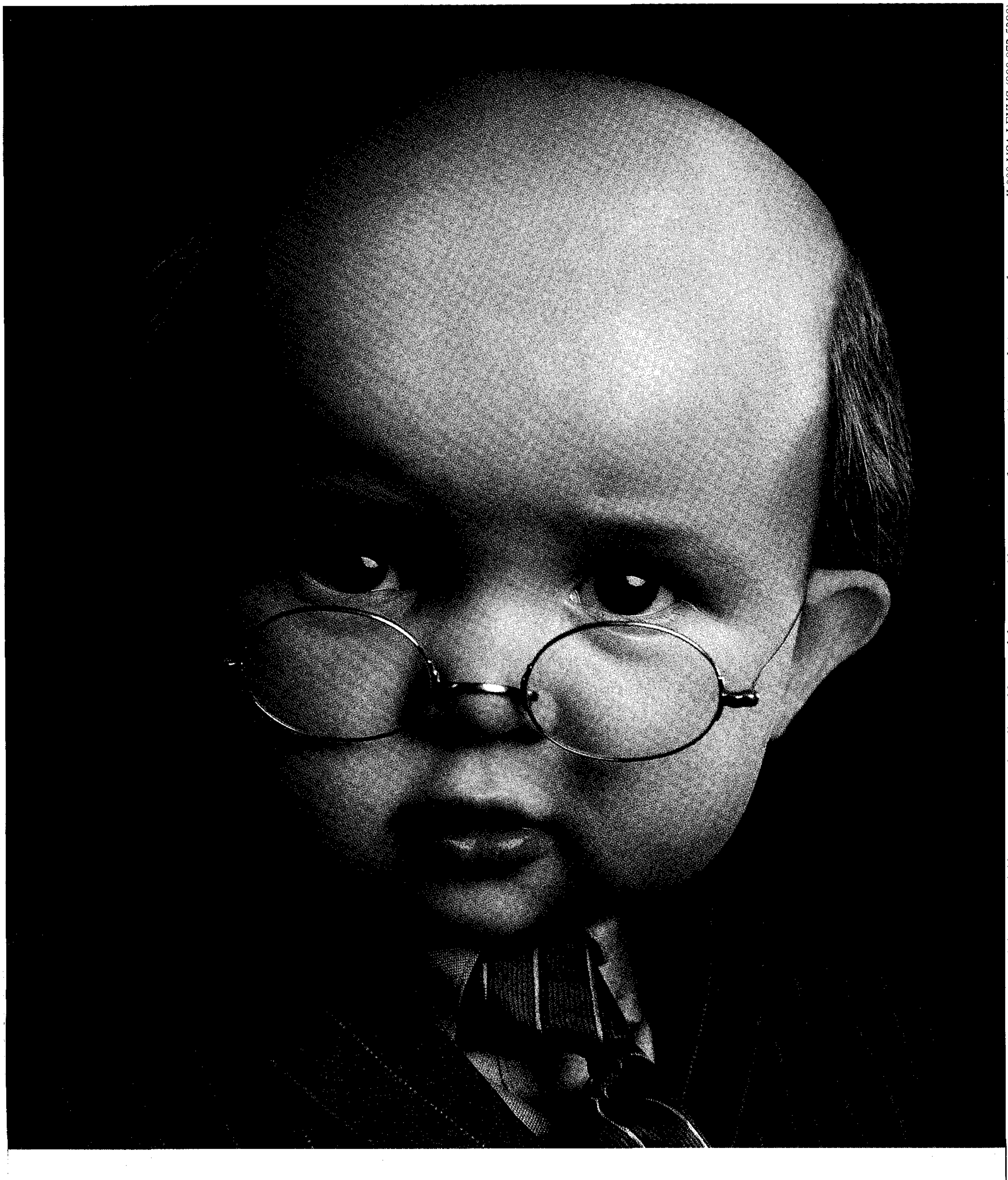
Death of a Salesman—The casting of this production of Arthur Miller's masterpiece is generally uneven, but the show still packs a wallop. (3/8/99) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

East Is East—This autobiographical first play by Ayub Khan-Din is set in a working-class English town in the seventies, in a family led by a bullheaded Pakistani father (Edward A. Hajj) and a more yielding English mother (Jenny Sterlin, in a vivid, vinegary performance). It is a lively and talky evening—there are six mostly grown, opinionated children in the family—and slightly to long. What is most memorable is Derek McLane's set, which features a chip shop s authentic you can smell food cooking, and living room with the kind of shabby-perk décor which has become a signature of Ne Group productions. Directed by Scott Elliott (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes July 18.

Fosse—This steamy revue of works by th choreographer Bob Fosse doesn't reveal anything new about the man behind the dance but it does remind us why we won't be forgetting him anytime soon. (Broadhurst, 23 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Gathering—Theodore Bikel stars in a ne play by Arje Shaw, about three generation of a family living in New York during th Reagan years. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91 St. 239-6200.)

Gemini—Albert Innaurato's 1976 comedy, s at the birthday party of a sexually confuse Harvard student. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43 St. 246-4422. Closes July 11.)



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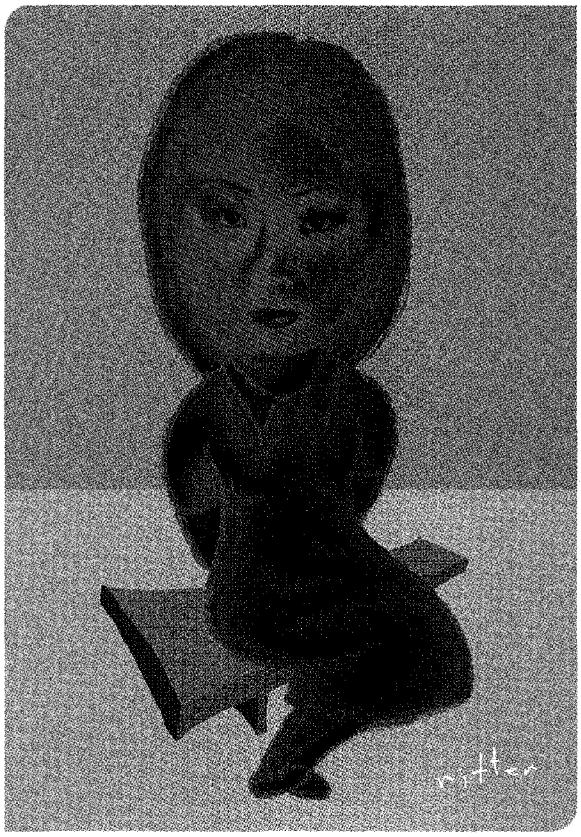


Margaret Cho, in "I'm the One That I Want."

Hurrah at Last—The main character of Richard Greenberg's latest play is a whiny, money-obsessed novelist called Laurie (Peter Frechette), and he is clever (has Greenberg ever created a main character who is not?) without being compelling. It doesn't help matters that he has a bad cold all through the first act and is even sicker in the second act, most of which takes place while he's stuck in a hospital bed. Laurie's fevered perceptions are rarely revelatory, and a remark he makes about being in the hospital describes all too well the over-all effect of the play itself: "There's this general feeling of profundity, but it never turns into anything specifically interesting." Directed by David Warren. A Roundabout staging. (6/14/99) (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 719-1300.)

The Iceman Cometh—Eugene O'Neill's despairing, four-and-a-half-hour drama about a barroom full of losers. This beautiful production is a rare opportunity to see a fully realized staging of a masterpiece by America's first great playwright. It has countless rewards, not the least of which is an outstanding ensemble cast that Kevin Spacey, in a brilliant turn as the crazily optimistic salesman Hickey, leads in a way that lights up all the other performances rather than overshadowing them. Howard Davies is the director. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100. Closes July 17.)

If Love Were All—Twiggy and Harry Groener star as Gertrude Lawrence and Noël Coward, in this appealing revue-cum-reminiscence by Sheridan Morley; the pair sing some twenty Coward songs and portray, with sweetness and without sentimentality, the remarkable lifelong friendship between the two, who met when Noël was twelve and Gertie fourteen. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

In Dahomey—Shirley Verrett stars in the 1903 musical by Will Marion Cook and Will Vodery, one of the first Broadway shows written and produced by black artists. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 353-1176.)

It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues—A marvellous collection of songs performed by a dynamic cast. The music alone could have showcased the influence of the blues, but instead the audience is subjected to explanatory notes and bad-talk-show banter. Fortunately, the blues triumphantly survives even this. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Joy Luck Club—Susan Kim's adaptation of the Amy Tan novel, staged by the Pan Asian Rep. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

Macbeth—Free outdoor Shakespeare, from the Gorilla Rep, opening its tenth-anniversary season with performances at the Cloisters. (Fort Tryon Park. For information, call 330-8086. Closes July 18.)

A Midsummer Night's Dream—The Shakespeare Project's rambunctious production, playing in parks around the city, makes for a delightful summer evening. In a neat conceptual twist, the fairies are puppets (created by Ralph Lee, of the Village Halloween Parade) manipulated by the actors; the technical strains of acting while puppeteering do show at times, and the cast is mixed, but it's hard to quibble in the face of so much fun. Ben Lipitz, as Bottom, and Brian Tom O'Connor, doubling as an Athenian noble and as a mechanical, are particularly good. Directed with wit and economy by Scott Cargle. (For information about dates and locations, call 946-1869.)

Peter Pan—The former Olympic gymnast Cathy Rigby stars in a limited engagement of the 1954 musical. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Small Craft Warning—David Greenspan leads the cast of the Worth Street Theatre's production of Tennessee Williams's 1972 drama. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St., at West Broadway. 604-4195. Closes July 19.)

Snakebit—Two guys, a gal, and an AIDS test. With all the one-liners and dialogue cued by contemporary culture, this comedy-drama by the actor and first-time playwright David Marshall Grant, like a lot of new plays, seems like a sitcom rewritten for the stage (fewer jokes, more "issues"). The cast, though, is topnotch. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

The Taming of the Shrew—Allison Janney has the lead in Shakespeare's comedy, the New York Shakespeare Festival's first outdoor production of the season. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750. Closes July 11.)

La Terrasse—An agonizingly airless comedy by Jean-Claude Carrière (the translation is by Mark O'Donnell). A couple is splitting up and is vacating their Paris apartment; before they depart, a real-estate agent shows the place to several prospective tenants, and, oh, what noncomedic high jinks ensue! Mike Ockrent's direction is like *mélasse en janvier*. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes July 18.)

Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight—Peter Ackerman's screwball bedroom comedy consists mainly of a sublimely ridiculous conference call involving three pairs of lovers. The questions about sex and the proper balance between intellectual and physical attraction have no answers, but Ackerman has some interesting suggestions, and, to his credit, comedy outweighs the theorizing. John Rando, the director, has a good eye, and the show comes off beautifully. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

This Lime Tree Bower—A delightful tale (by Conor McPherson, who also wrote "The Weir") of three young Irishmen, each of whom goes off the rails in various ways but, with a little help from the other two, is able to put his life back together again. Neatly told as a series of overlapping monologues, the play is funny and sharply observed, and sweet without being sentimental. A perfect antithesis to this season's blockbusters. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes July 18.)

Thwak—Comic acrobatics (both physical and vocal) from the Australian performers David Collins and Shane Dundas, a.k.a. the Umbilical Brothers. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek—Two teens living in a country town during the Depression are at the center of this drama by Naomi Wallace. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

Twelfth Night—The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival's season opener. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 914-265-9575.)

The Weir—Conor McPherson's play takes place in the musty chill of a backwater Irish pub, where a handful of habitués chew the cud of their solitude, spinning ghostly yarns that fill the air with glimmers of fear and resignation. It has a bittersweet charm, but for all the well-crafted talk and the well-observed bonhomie, it is finally a shaggy-bog story. (4/12/99) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Wonderland—A comedy-drama by Julia Dahl, set in Sag Harbor, about a group of politically minded members of Generation X. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

ART: Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOOTLOOSE:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. (Closes July 18.) . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SIDE MAN:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl 477-2477. . . . **SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE:** HERE 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 30 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **WIT:** Union Squar Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

Kirov Ballet—The two-hundred-and-seventeen-year-old company from St. Petersburg's Maryinsky Theatre presents four programs during its brief stay, including a "Giselle" based on the company's 1848 version and an evening of Balanchine works. (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. July 8-9 at 8 and July 7 and July 10 at 2 and 8.)

Ea Sola—The French-Vietnamese choreographer blends three Vietnamese traditions—*tuông*, an opera form with slow movements; *chèo*, a communard song-dance-mime routine; and *ca tru*, a singing style performed by young women at inns—in her evening-length work "Voilà Voilà." (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. July 7 and July 9-10 at 8.)

Pilobolus—For its summer season, the Vermont sextet offers three programs, each with a première ("A Selection," about a troupe that misses a train out of Nazi Germany; "Uno, Dos, Tray," about a pair of soldiers and a waitress; or the solo "Femme Noire"), and an assortment of repertory works created over the past quarter-century. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. July 5-9 and July 12-13 at 8 and July 10 at 2 and 8. Through July 31.)

Dances for Wave Hill—The outdoor dance series opens with three commissioned works: the Donna Uchizono Company brings the trio "Summer Hour"; Amiel Malale Dance premières "Hold You Tight Deep in My Wallet"; and performance artist Heather Henson and kite-maker Marc Ricketts collaborate on "Blooming Flight," a work for three dancers, three kite-makers, and assorted puppets and kites. (249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. For information, call 718-549-3200. July 7 at 6:30 and July 11 at 5.)

"Humor Unplucked"—The fourth annual installment of intentionally humorous dance and performance works includes "On the Tip of My Tongue," David Parker's trio for two men and a woman on pointe; "Pow," a duet about sixties nostalgia by Lynn Neuman and Daniel Gwirtzman; and "Sit," a solo that Carina Piaggio performs with a small statue of a dog. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 691-4551. July 8-10 at 8 and July 11 at 3.)

Asia Pacific Contemporary Dance Festival—July 5-6 at 8: HK/NY Dance Company. . . . ¶ July 8-9 at 8: Expressions Dance Company. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Through July 15.)

Elizabeth Streb/Ringside—The extreme-dance choreographer premières "Punch the Jump," in which the dancers try to land on a trampoline in such a way that other company members are catapulted unpredictably through the air. (Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. July 13 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—July 7-8 at 8, July 9 at 8:30, July 10 at 2 and 8:30, and July 11 at 2: Trisha Brown Company. . . . ¶ July 8-9 at 8:15 and July 10-11 at 5: Ronald K. Brown/Evidence. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Britney Spears—The seventeen-year-old former Mouseketeer turned bubblegum sensation. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. July 7 at 7:30.)

Midsummer Night Swing—Dancing under the stars at Lincoln Center. July 7: Accordion expert Boozoo Chavis, touring in support of his new album, "Who Stole My Monkey?," leads a night of two-step, waltz, and zydeco dancing. . . . ¶ July 8: Les Mécènes, from French Guiana, and Sweet Micky, from Haiti. . . . ¶ July 9: Joquinha and Daniel Gonzaga are the grandson and nephew, respectively, of Luiz Gonzaga, the father of *ferro*, the dance music of northeastern Brazil. Along with accordionist Oswaldinho Do Acordeon, they pay tribute to the master. . . . ¶ July 10 at 4: Ray Condo and his Ricochets, Steve Lucky and the Rhumba Bums, Bellevue Cadillac, the Johnny Nocturne Band, and the Bill Elliott Orchestra answer the question "What is swing?," which is also the subject of a panel discussion starting at 1. . . . ¶ July 13: Romulo Larrea and his ensemble lead an evening of Argentinean tango. (Unless otherwise noted, performances begin at 8:15, with dance lessons starting at 6:30. For more information, call 875-5766.)

Celebrate Brooklyn!—Before there was the Buena Vista Social Club there was **¡Cubanismo!**, a multigenerational ensemble formed five years ago in Havana by trumpeter Jesús Alemañy. Unlike Buena Vista, they haven't yet won a Grammy, but they have turned out three outstanding and popular albums that successfully marry old-timers' experience and younger musicians' enthusiasm to keep alive *son*, mambo, *descarga*, and other forms of Cuban music. Their latest release, "Reencarnación," features the veteran vocalist Rolando (Rolo) Martinez, and he's sure to be a treat onstage. With guitarist **Ned Sublette**, a West Texas native and New York transplant who visited Havana nine years ago and hasn't looked back. The label he founded, Qbadisk, helped set in motion the wave of Cuban music that has washed up on these shores this decade. "Cowboy Rhumba," his most recent album, is a bilingual excursion through the music of his birthplace and of his favorite Caribbean island. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St., Brooklyn. 718-855-7882, ext. 52. July 9 at 7:30.)

"Community Services Tour"—Electronica may have failed to arrive as a commercial revolution, but the computer jockeys march on. Orbital, the British duo that was there at the beginning, shares a bill with the Crystal Method, a collective with a knack for dredging humanity from its machines, and the big-beat-meets-rock-and-roll sounds of the Lo Fidelity Allstars. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center. July 9 at 8.)

Central Park SummerStage—Free music in New York City's back yard. July 10 at 3: **Clarence (Gatemouth) Brown** is past seventy, but you'd never know it from his sinewy sound. Like virtually every other Texas blues guitarist of the last half-century, he owes much to T-Bone Walker, but unlike his fellow disciples he's always sought to expand the vocabulary of the blues, mixing in elements of country, Cajun, and jazz. For this show he's backed by a big band led by the arranger Wardell Quezergue, so expect a whole lot of swingin'. With Laurel Aitken, the septuagenarian godfather of ska, and the Allstonians. July 11 at 3: Salsa diva **India** and her orchestra. With the up-and-coming *salsero* Frankie Negrón. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 360-2777.)

Lauryn Hill—Having now sold some five million copies of her Grammy-dominating opus "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill," New Jersey's finest gift to pop music since Sinatra takes her solo act on the road. With old-school rappers Slick Rick and Doug E. Fresh. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. July 11 at 7:30.)

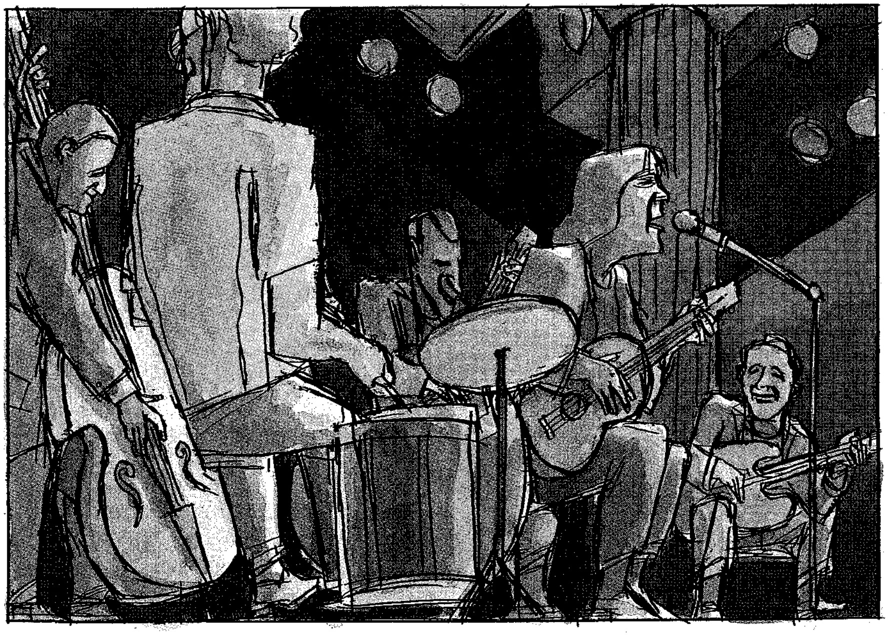
Cher—Thanks to the tacky, if unbelievably irresistible, disco smash "Believe," Cher now enjoys full-metal diva status again. Her recent VH-1 appearance signalled her return to the rarefied world inhabited by such deluxe divas as Tina Turner and Elton John. With the eighties relic Cyndi Lauper. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. July 13 at 8.)

CLUBS

(Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—July 8: **John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers.** July 10: **David Johansen and the Harry Smiths.** Beautiful American music. Johansen's accomplished acoustic band—guitarists Brian Koonin and Larry Saltzman, bassist Kermit Driscoll, and drummer Joey Baron—takes its name from the man who put together the hugely influential "Anthology of American Folk Music" (1952). They use the songs and the spirit of those records as a jumping-off point for an evening of folk, country, and blues tunes that are heartfelt, funny, and often very odd indeed. July 12-13: Back in the eighties, the acerbic piano man **Joe Jackson** was the anti-Billy Joel, the alternative Elvis Costello. Leading a fierce combo, Jackson invented a crisp, Cole Porter sort of punk. A few years ago, after a long hiatus, he nearly ruined his reputation with a collection of bloated orchestral numbers. Now, in a decision that bodes well for his future, he joins two sidemen from his early days, bassist **Graham Maby** and drummer **Gary Burke**, for shows that should be full of the spark with which he made his name.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—July 7: The lovely sounds of singer-songwriter **Lucy Kaplansky.** July 10: Downtown songwriter



David Johansen and the Harry Smiths, at the Bottom Line.

and guitarist **OREN BLOEDOW** celebrates his thirty-fourth birthday. Joining him are a number of the bands he's contributed to, including Black Beetle and Elysian Fields, which features the captivating vocals of his girlfriend, Jennifer Charles. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—July 8: **KULA SHAKER.** This quartet, with its retro pop, is regularly compared to other disturbingly popular English throwbacks, but the members of Kula Shaker have found Hinduism, and the Sanskrit mantras that influence them make their work a far cry from the sneering cynicism of Oasis. Their second album, "Peasants, Pigs & Astronauts," has them keeping the faith with blissful style. July 9: **FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE.** No sophomore slump here: "Utopia Parkway," the second album by this talented pop quartet, led by songwriters Adam Schlesinger and Chris Collingwood, is every bit as bright, funny, and addictive as their fantastic 1996 self-titled début. The themes are the same: unrequited love, suburban ennui, teen covetousness. But the nova luminosity of the first disk has dimmed a bit in favor of slightly more complex arrangements and more adventurous melodies. Live, a full set of the best Fountains of Wayne tunes makes for a perfect summertime soundtrack. With San Francisco's **IMPERIAL TEEN,** makers of a glorious, whooshing pop, unstoppable and unforgettable. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

JOE'S PUB, 425 Lafayette St. (539-8770)—July 8: **CARL HANCOCK RUX** is a young poet from Harlem who has quickly made his way from the dark corners of the Nuyorican Poets Café to the bright lights of a major-label record deal. "Rux Revue" (which is due out in early September) is a deeply captivating account of the artist's life—from "Blue Candy," a song about his discovery, at age four, of his grandmother's dead body, to "No Black Male Show," which deals with his experiences in the entertainment business. Backed by a band that includes guitarist **RONNIE DRAYTON, D.J. SINGE,** and the great singer-songwriter **TOSHI REAGON,** Rux alternates, in a deep, resonant voice, between singing and speaking, carefully keeping the focus on his insightful words.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—July 10: The **BINDLESTIFF FAMILY CIRKUS** brings its twisted midway madness to the stage. July 13: **FUNKSTÖRUNG,** German for "radio interference," is the name under which the German Michael Fakesch and the Italian Chris De Luca operate when they are reconstructing contemporary pop tunes. On "Additional Productions," the duo's latest sublime work, they create fascinatingly controlled chaos out of singles by artists as diverse as Björk and the Wu-Tang Clan. It's a highly advanced Continental sound, and Berlitz won't help—you'll have to come up with your own translations.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—July 9: His star is somewhat in decline these days, but the Kansas-born singer-songwriter **FREEDY JOHNSTON** still remains one of our finest practitioners of the art. The clubs he plays are smaller now, but that only means his talent floods the room.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—July 8: Topnotch singer-songwriter **KEVIN SALEM,** who has played guitar for Freedy Johnston and Yo La Tengo. July 9: The underground country of **ROBBIE FULKS.**

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—July 7: English drum-and-bass purveyors **ED RUSH** and **OPTICAL,** who specialize in the darker side of high-speed electronic dance music. Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—July 10: What with their Marlboro Man looks and their slithering, down-and-dirty velvet metal sound, **GIRLS AGAINST BOYS** have an effortless sex appeal that most indie bands would trade their well-studied geek cool for in a minute. With the post-rock sounds of Joan of Arc guitarist **TIM KINSELLA** and the enigmatic singer Chan Marshall, who goes by the name **CAT POWER.** July 13: **WILLIE NELSON.** Last year, at age sixty-five, this grizzled highwayman made "Teatro," possibly the best album of his career. The session, produced by Daniel Lanois (the Canadian tone-meister who worked a similar cryogenic miracle with Bob Dylan), forced Nelson to narrow his range and cut away any trimmings. Catching his leathery poise in an intimate club sounds like pure prairie heaven.

Carl Hancock Rux, at Joe's Pub.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—July 9-10: **OZRIC TENTACLES,** the five-piece English combo that is single-handedly keeping the spirit of seventies-era art rock alive. July 11: **LAUREL AITKEN** (see Central Park SummerStage, in Concerts).

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **SUSANNAH MC CORKLE** is currently at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Dining.

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—July 8-10: The **JACKY TERRASSON** quartet. Pianist Terrasson plays the way he wants to play: tempos, dynamics, and arrangements are just so much fodder to be bent, shaped, and messed with. A Terrasson set is flexible—it all depends on his mood. The spontaneity may be admirable and exciting, but why does it all sound so mannered? Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through July 11: The **ROY HAYNES** quartet and the **DAVÍD SANCHEZ** quintet. The jazz life can either take you out early (Bix Beiderbecke, Charlie Parker, et al.) or keep you in a state of perpetual youth. The great bop-and-beyond drummer Haynes is seventy-three, yet the urgency and sheer force of his playing would be remarkable in a percussionist of any age. / Sanchez is a budding tenor-sax titan whose burly tone and architectural phrasing call to mind Sonny Rollins. Latin idioms are his trump card—for this passionate young talent, the clave is as important as the cadence of hard bop. Dining.

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through July 11: The **GEORGE COLEMAN** quartet. Saxophonist Coleman is a marvel. There isn't a player who knows his instrument better, nor one who feels as compelled to hit a musical home run with each expansive solo. Coleman's drive and vigor are matched by his longtime partners, pianist **HAROLD MABERN** and bassist **JAMIL NASSER,** and the addition of **JOE FARNSWORTH** on drums will turn this into a steaming affair. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

JAZZ STANDARD, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—July 7-11: The **JONNY KING** quintet. King plays smart jazz piano, drawing on a host of superior models as he firms up his own increasingly authoritative voice. His solid quartet includes saxophonist **TIM ARMACOST,** trumpeter **SCOTT WENDHOLT,** bassist **DENNIS IRWIN,** and drummer **BILLY DRUMMOND.** Dining.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—July 7-10: A peripheral figure for decades (due mainly to her deep involvement in jazz education), pianist and vocalist **VALERIE CAPERS** is long overdue for some recognition. She's accompanied by bassist **JOHN ROBINSON.**

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—July 7-9: **JOHN LURIE AND THE LOUNGE LIZARDS.** Let's acknowledge the Lizards as a geniune band. Having put the hipster posturing and "fake jazz" self-designation behind them, the members of Lurie's stylistically expansive mini-orchestra now use their musical smarts rather than their image to define themselves. July 12: Old buddies and musical partners pianist **FRED HERSCH** and soprano saxophonist **JANE IRA BLOOM** were born to play duets. When they're not uncovering the lyrical foundations of a tune, they're gleefully reconfiguring harmonies and formal structures with a tightrope walker's grace.

SMALLS, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night. Stocked to the gills with exciting players, the **JASON LINDNER BIG BAND** holds court every Monday.

TONIC, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—July 10: **MARTY EHRLICH'S DARK WOODS ENSEMBLE.** With this textured, responsive trio—featuring **MARK HELIAS** on bass, **ERIC FRIEDLANDER** on cello, and the leader on clarinets and flutes—Ehrlich has brought spiky new energy to contemporary chamber jazz. Also on July 11: **WILLIAM PARKER & THE LITTLE HUEY CREATIVE MUSIC ORCHESTRA.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through July 11: The redoubtable pianist **KENNY BARRON** is usually flanked by two old friends, bassist Buster Williams and drummer **BEN RILEY.** The impeccable Riley is on board here, but Williams will be replaced by **KIYOSHI KITAGAWA** a move that may positively shake up the smoothness that comes with overfamiliarity. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream." Moreau (1826-98) is loosely confined within the context of symbolism, an aesthetic sensibility more than a movement, characterized as much by avant-gardism as by more traditional artistic impulses. Most of the paintings and drawings in this exhibition come from the Musée Gustave Moreau, in Paris, the artist's former residence; it remains the ideal environment in which to experience his sensorially rich, often weird and violent pictures. Nevertheless, this show offers ample opportunity to reconsider Moreau. Uninspired by the innovations of Courbet's realism and the succeeding generation of Impressionists, Moreau also disdained academic technique; instead, he forged a singular style, drawing inspiration from Italian Renaissance, medieval, Japanese, Mughal, and other sources. Curiously, Moreau's works—with their combination of drawing and painting, tenebrous chiaroscuro and jewellike color—look fresher now than many Impressionist canvases, which, through the sheer number of shows devoted to them, are beginning to seem like so much visual white noise. Through Aug. 22. . . . ¶ "Prayerbook for a Queen: The Hours of Jeanne D'Evreux," approximately three dozen illustrated pages by one of the masters of medieval illumination, Jean Pucelle (active 1320-34), are on view. Through Aug. 29. . . . ¶ In an adjacent gallery, a related show called "Devotions and Diversions" gathers some of the finest northern-European books from the dawn of printmaking. Through Aug. 29. . . . ¶ "Cézanne to van Gogh: The Collection of Dr. Gachet." More than fifty works (by Monet, Pissarro, Guillaumin, Sisley, Renoir, and, above all, Cézanne and van Gogh) owned by van Gogh's doctor have travelled across the Atlantic for the first time. Through Aug. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Collecting in Depth: Drawings by Grosz, Schwitters, Ernst, and Klee." In a nod to the barrage of drawing shows currently on view around Manhattan, MOMA's staff has put together an exhibition that casually proves who's top dog when it comes to twentieth-century works on paper. Each of the four artists represented gets a room to himself, and each room is crowded with delights and oddities. Schwitters, represented by almost forty works, including a handful of his finest abstract collages, steals the spotlight, but even Max Ernst, the Surrealist ideologue who should be the show's weak link, turns in a memorably lovely trifle, made from advertisements for panama hats. Through July 20. . . . ¶ "The Un-Private House" presents twenty-six houses (via designs, maquettes, digitally enhanced photographs, and interactive computer displays) that update the idea of the four (very un-) solid walls of home. Through Oct. 5. . . . ¶ "Fame After Photography." Opens July 8. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Surrealism: Two Private Eyes." A vast exhibition composed of work from the separate collections of publisher Daniel Filipacchi and the late Nesuhi Ertegun, who, as a partner with his brother Ahmet, owned Atlantic Records. The show is rich in terrific works, including such iconic Surrealist masterpieces as René Magritte's "The Rape" (1934), Salvador Dali's "The Phenomenon of Ecstasy" (1933), and Giorgio de Chirico's "The Disquieting Muses" (1925), and two astonishing rooms—one devoted to Cornell boxes, the other to Surrealist bookbinding. There is a lot of marvellous or, at the very least, curious work by lesser-known artists; on the other hand, there is a lot of dreck, both by unknown figures and by famous ones having a bad art day. Through Sept. 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-2000 (Part I: 1900-50)" is exactly what its unimaginative title implies—a grand, bland survey, full of familiar milestones but remarkably short on fresh connections or surprises. There's plenty to see, however: the six-hundred-odd works include architectural models, furniture, ceramics, magazine covers, and kitchen appliances, as well as canonical paintings and photographs. Ideally, the museum's educational mission should dovetail with its aesthetic one; here, the history lesson takes over, making for a dutiful, stolid, rainy-day resource. Through Aug. 22; Part II opens Sept. 26. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The Gottesman Hall of Planet Earth is open, with rock formations, ice-core samples, earthquake and volcanic-events tickers, and other geologic displays. . . . ¶ "Epidemic! The World of Infectious Disease." Through Sept. 6. . . . ¶ "The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition." Through Oct. 11. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Winslow Homer: Illustrating America" offers more than a hundred wood engravings, including many made when the artist was covering the Civil War. Through Oct. 10. . . . ¶ "Impressionists in Winter: Effets de Neige." Through Aug. 29. . . . ¶ "Mariko Mori: Empty Dream" offers computer-generated photographs and installations by the Japanese artist. Through Aug. 15. (Open Tuesdays for the Impressionist show only, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 10 to 5; Thursdays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

DAHESH MUSEUM, 601 Fifth Ave., at 49th St. (759-0606)—"Revealing the Holy Land: The Photographic Exploration of Palestine." Almost immediately after the invention of photography, in 1839, early practitioners from Europe descended upon Jerusalem, in order to document the Biblical landscape. Twenty-five years later, in the eighteen-sixties, a British sergeant named James McDonald took the long-ignored survey photographs that form the core of this show. His beautifully composed views of Sinai, often centered on a single tree or central plain, make the Middle East look remarkably like O'Sullivan's or Watkins's boundless American West, and his city scenes and images of ruins present Jerusalem's monumentality with a classical grace that recalls the works in the Dahesh's only other photography show to date—nineteenth-century images of Greece and Rome. Through Aug. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (217-5800)—"Papiers à la Mode: Illusions of Fashion." There is no plausible reason for these trompe-l'oeil paper clothes created by Isabelle de Borchgrave and Rita Brown. The outfits—a "gold and silk" 1745 Venetian court dress and a "satin and velvet" Victorian evening gown among them—are more like sculpture than anything else, built out of finely painted, multiply varnished paper that re-creates centuries of European and Japanese fabrics. They do not refer to the uses of paper in clothing, nor do they advance or expand fashion or the documentation of it. Why, then? Because they're pretty. Through Aug. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

If art is timeless, why aren't museums open 24 hours?

ArtMuseum.net

State-of-the-art art

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Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St. (838-6690)—"Stamped with a National Character: Nineteenth-Century American Color Plate Books." This splendid exhibition, curated by William S. Reese, is rife with bibliophilic treasures. The show opens with English emigré William Birch's hand-colored copperplate engravings for "The City of Philadelphia . . . As It Appeared in the Year 1800" (published in that year) and closes with Frederick M. Sheldon's "The Practical Colorist" (1900), which includes some gorgeously overblown pink roses printed in trichromatic halftones. For the intervening years, the show takes up such themes as nature studies, the Native American, the Audubons, science, exotica, and fashion. In our era of digital superfluities cropping up in all media, these meticulously produced color plates are less the relics of antiquarian bookshops than they are technical marvels of precision and vivacity. Through July 31. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.)

José Bedia—Recent works on paper and canvas by this noted Cuban-born artist. In one of the most striking pieces, a wiry giant strides across a mountainous landscape, ignoring the small stylized heads that peek out from crags below. In another, an elongated woman reaches out to open a box, from which an undulating snake springs forward, as if to kiss her. The meaning of these mythological narratives isn't always clear, but they are drawn with delightful precision and economy. Through July 17. (Galeria Ramis Barquet, 41 E. 57th St. 644-9090.)

Adriane Herman—"À la Carte," an exhibition of humorous collages and objects by an artist who is a graduate of the Wilton Method Cake Decorating School (levels I and II). A portfolio called "Y2caKe" documents Herman's deployment of her skills behind the bakery counter of a grocery store in Kansas City, Missouri. (After a year, she was "ignominiously fired in the cat food aisle.") Also included is a "mobile art-vending unit" that displays chocolate bars wrapped in the artist's ink-jet prints. Though scattered and chaotic, Herman's work exudes an appetizing silliness. Through July 30. (Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338.)

Odd Nerdrum—Grandiose self-portraits, in which this Norwegian artist's considerable painterly talents service his colossal narcissism. The centerpiece, "Self-Portrait as the Prophet of Painting," shows Nerdrum in a full-length golden robe bedecked with pearls, carrying a palette and brush, against a dusky northern horizon. It's pure opera buffa. In another canvas, he lifts the same robe up to his chest to expose his stately belly and prodigiously curved erection—all the while giving the viewer a pained, sombre expression. If this show had a soundtrack, it would be "You're So Vain," sung in a gravelly Nordic basso. Through July 30. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545.)

Stephan Cornelius Roberts—Gigantic female nudes, painted in a luminous yet plodding Photo-Realist style. Young, attractive, and approximately ten feet tall, Roberts's women stare out at the viewer with a cool poise that forbids titillation. The finest of them, seen in a full-length back view ("Painting of M. Again"), has a distinctive, exaggerated solidity. The others are so prim and bland that it's easy to imagine them as candidates for some sort of nudist political office. Through July 23. (Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 987-4997.)

"Another Country: The Constructed Landscape"—From the large, eye-popping "conglomerates" of Benjamin Edwards, which distill dozens of roadside gas stations or fast-food restaurants into single paintings, to the sly, small paintings of Merlin James (in an unmistakably drab English palette), this group show offers a variety of fresh takes on a normally staid genre. There are plenty of clouds and trees and flowers here, but even the most recognizable—Eva Lundsager's grand, liquefying skyscrapers, or Sharon Ellis's sleek and sinister flora—are full of singular charms. Through July 21. (Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444.)

"Spots"—A juried show of top "spot art," the insider term for magazine and newspaper illustrations, features as-is originals by established masters and new talent. Contributors include David Levine, Steve Brodner, Melinda Beck, R. O. Blechman, Al Hirschfeld, and Ben Katchor. Through July 31. (Society of Illustrators, 128 E. 63rd St. 838-2560.)

Short List—**joseph beuys,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Through July 9. . . . **michael brennan,** Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. 265-8876. Through July 31. . . . **herbert brown,** Gat, 1100 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. 327-0441. Through Sept. 30. . . . **charles henri ford,** Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444. Through July 16. . . . **jasper johns,** Sheehan, 20 W. 57th St. 489-3331. Through July 31. . . . **liza lou,** Vanderbilt Hall, Grand Central Terminal. Through July 26. . . . **jan matulka,** York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155. Through July 30. . . . **may stevens,** Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669. Through Aug. 25.

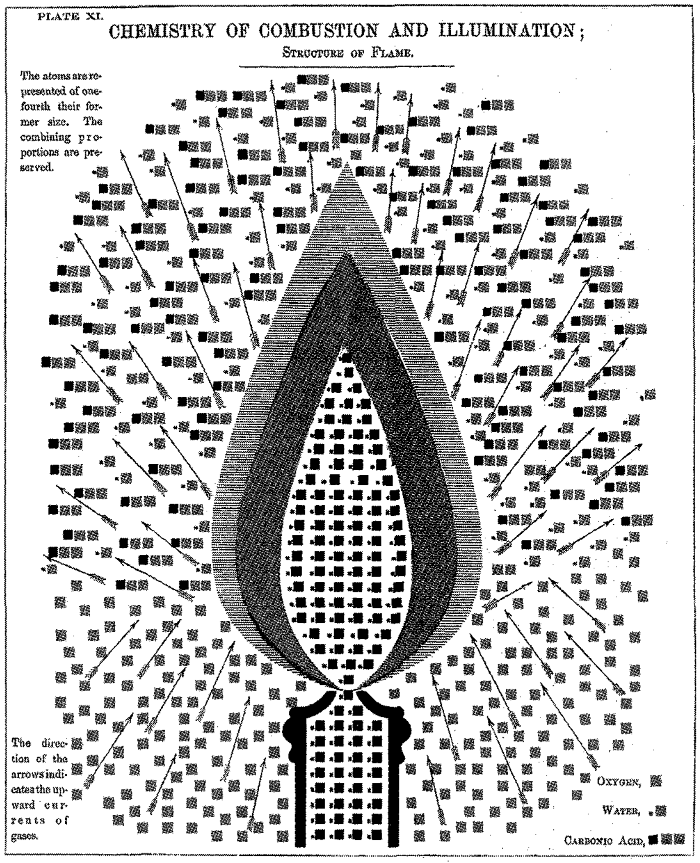


PLATE XI.
CHEMISTRY OF COMBUSTION AND ILLUMINATION;
Structure of Flame.
The atoms are represented of one-fourth their former size. The combining proportions are preserved.
The direction of the arrows indicates the upward currents of gases.
Oxygen,
Water,
Carbonic Acid,

An illustration by Edward L. Youmans, included in a show of nineteenth-century color-plate books, at the Grolier Club.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Saint Clair Cemin—Sculptures in marble and bronze, on pedestals that are part of the action. Cemin's quizzical, hard-to-read attitude toward his subject matter—a figure of the Sphinx, for example, has a deliberately pitted surface rather than one that has seemingly suffered the effects of age—makes this show more Sphinx-like than it needed to be. Through July 30. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

Tatyana Murray—"Random Grace," the New York début of this young English sculptor, consists of slabs of light, plasterlike material, which bubble out into balloonlike shapes, as if someone had cast the walls of an apartment during a child's birthday party. Covered in red, blue, and black velvet, they're striking, but they don't quite get out of the Neat Effect category. Through July 17. (I-20, at 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100.)

"Hang Time"—A summery group show, curated by Debra Singer and Lauren Ross, with works by nine artists (or art teams) devoted to leisure and sport: Pam Lins photographed Nerf footballs in midflight, Janet Cohen charted baseball pitch location, Cristian Alexa documented his protest against the daily grind (he lay around in a hammock in a park near Wall Street). Through Aug. 1. (White Columns, 320 W. 13th St. 924-4212.)

"7 Women"—The title says it all—except that the women in these paintings, sculptures, and photographs have all been depicted by men. An inquiry into femininity, or a cheerful exercise in misogyny, perchance? Best to check the archcritical attitude at the door, as this show isn't particularly discursive; it does, however, include excellent works, such as one of Thomas Ruff's enormous photographic portrait heads and a rough-hewn wooden odalisque by Stephan Balkenhol. The exhibition's centerpiece is dazzlingly weird—a hyperrealist seated Stepford nude by John DeAndrea. Mel Ramos's luridly funny painting of one of his typical bosomy nudes standing beside a bull will also raise eyebrows. Through Aug. 6. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

Short List—**andrew castrucci,** Generous Miracles, 529 W. 20th St. 352-2858. Through Sept. 30. . . . **laura emrick,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through July 30. . . . **erik hanson,** Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411. Through July 31. . . . **rudi molacek,** Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 807-9494. Through July 30. . . . **michael paha,** Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500. Through July 30. . . . **tony smith,** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Through July 15. . . . **rirkrit tiravanija,** Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258. Through Aug. 31. . . . **vangelis vlahos,** Kapernakas, 526 W. 26th St. 462-5150. Through July 17.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Barton Lidice Beneš—A collection of the artist's "museums," meticulously labelled and organized by theme. "Celebrity," for example, contains the drawstring from a pair of Kevin Bacon's workout pants, a vial of Sylvester Stallone's urine, and a starstruck hummingbird, "killed when it flew into Elizabeth Taylor's picture window in Palm Springs, 1988." It's not easy to decide whether these cubbyholes of artifacts are art, exactly but they're certainly artful, engaging, and—one presumes—authentic. A folder of accompanying documentation include a handwritten note from Václa

Havel proclaiming, "Yes, this is really my hair!" Through July 30. (Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012.)

"Mozart on Television"—A group show of new painting from Germany, with works by Monika Baer, Peter Klare, Dirk Skreber, and Daniel Richter, among others. Through Aug. 6. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

Short List—**PEDRO BARBEITO,** Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831. Through July 30. . . . **BRIAN DELACEY,** Blue, 203 Lafayette St. 343-2446. Opens at noon Tuesdays through Sundays; through July 18. . . . **SYLVIE FLEURY** and **JOHN ARMLEDER,** Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599. Both shows through Aug. 30. . . . **CHARLES MARTIN,** June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 226-1660. Through July 30. . . . **AUSTIN THOMAS,** Sara Meltzer's On View, 588 Broadway. 343-8256. Through July 30. . . . **CHARMAINE WHEATLEY,** A.I.R., 40 Wooster St. 966-0799. Through July 8. . . . **MICHAEL ZWACK,** Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219. Through July 9.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Francesca Woodman (1958-81)—It seems appropriate that most of the images in this exhibit measure no more than four by five inches, considering that self-effacement was so much a part of Woodman's work. Although many of her photographs are self-portraits, she seemed to focus on her body only so that she could diminish it—by masking it in crumbling wallpaper or blurring it out of focus. Made mainly while Woodman was a student at the Rhode Island School of Design and during a year spent in Rome, most of the pictures evoke a disturbing sense of alienation which, when overdone, can start to feel contrived and art-schoolish. Sadly, this nascent stage of Woodman's development is all there is to go by; the artist took her own life when she was twenty-two. Through Aug. 31. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

"The Full Monty"—Male nudes through the ages, by such photographers as Wilhelm von Gloeden, Man Ray, George Platt Lynes, Diane Arbus, and Peter Hujar. Through Aug. 13. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

"Pure Products of America"—A three-artist show of black-and-white photographs of suburban life by Robert Adams, Bill Owens, and Henry Wessel. Through July 16. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.)

"Russia in Transition: 1978-1998"—Works by such artists as Vladimir Filonov, Heidi Bradner, Jason Eskenazi, and Thomas Dworzak. Through Aug. 7. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051.)

"Summer Reading"—Photographs and photograms of books, including works by Andrew Bush, Tim Maul, Abelardo Morrell, Fawn Potash, Allison Rossiter, and Masao Yamamoto. Through Aug. 27. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

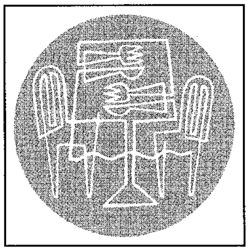
"Summer Salon VI"—An always breezy group show, this time featuring works by Peter Garfield, Orit Raff, and Leonard Nimoy. Through Aug. 20. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

'Thin Air"—Minimalist works by James Welling, Randy West, Bing Wright, and others. Through Aug. 20. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

'Thirteen"—Photographs by artists from the latest issue of *Blind Spot*, among them Graciela Iturbide, Barbara Ess, Vik Muniz, and Rosalind Solomon. Through Aug. 20. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600.)

Tina Modotti and Edward Weston: Mexican Years"—Vintage prints made by the modernist pair during their years (1923-26) in Mexico, where Modotti matured from Weston's studio manager and pupil into his colleague. (Her status as muse remained unchanged.) In looking at some of the pictures, it can be difficult to distinguish whose is whose; both artists favored clean architectural lines and up-close naturalism. But while Modotti dared to flirt with propaganda, photographing a Cuban revolutionary's typewriter and campesinos reading the Communist newspaper *El Machete*, Weston was a devotee of studied form, whether that of his nude protégée, of diaphanous clouds, or of a maguey cactus. These visual differences foreshadowed ideological ones, which kept an increasingly activist Modotti in Mexico when Weston returned to California. But, before their split, both captured the raw elegance of Mexico and its people with a startling unaffectedness. Through July 17. (Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059.)

TABLES FOR TWO



Circus, 808 Lexington Ave., at 63rd St. (223-2965)—Set aside conventional notions of a typical New York *churrascaria* (that's Portuguese for "grill room") before you arrive at this festive Brazilian bistro. The co-owner, Andréa Sande, an actress and model from Rio who wears stilettos the way some other women wear Keds, confides that the place was built upon a bet: "When we were deciding what to do, back in 1994, my partner, Paulo Oliveira, wanted to open up something suave and Italian, and I wanted something down-home and Brazilian." A smile breaks across her face. "Well, guess who was playing in the World Cup finals that year."

What her winning bet wrought is a place both suave *and* down-home—a glamorous expatriate's home away from home. Moving about the warmly lit, lemon-colored rooms, which are adorned by playful circus drawings, the good-looking servers greet regulars with an exuberant repertoire of kisses, pats, hugs, and exclamations.

While looking over the unassuming menu, have an icy *caipirina* (Brazilians, a waiter is quick to point out, know how to shake, and this expertly oscillated mixture of lime juice, sugar, and Brazilian sugarcane liquor proves him right). Then, start with tiger prawns and ruby-red papaya, zigzagged with dill-and-yogurt dressing and set on a sea-green dish, or try the seared, thinly sliced yellowfin tuna, which is given a touch of sweetness by a sugarcane marinade. Most of the menu, though, is humble and home-style: creamy corn cakes topped by a silky mound of shredded oxtail; corn soup with collard greens and chicken; shrimp, corn, hearts of palm, and peas baked inside an acorn squash; and *feijoada*, the black-bean stew with pork, beef, and sausage which is Brazil's national dish. Only slightly less complex is the poached-egg-topped beef *picadinho*—just the kind of soothing stew a São Paulo grandmother might serve as a cure for homesickness.

Desserts, all creaminess and no crunch, complement the easygoing languor of the late-night atmosphere at Circus. End your evening with the delicate flan or the bananas soaked in rum and brown sugar, while listening to the soft phrases of Portuguese and the laughter that float across the room. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for lunch and dinner, Sundays for dinner only. Entrées $15-$23.)

International Center of Photography—"Sea Change: The Seascape in Contemporary Photography." Through Sept. 26. . . . ¶ "Myths, Dreams, and Realities in Contemporary Argentine Photography." Through Sept. 26. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"The Photography of Celebrity," a preview exhibition for a benefit auction of works by, among others, Cecil Beaton, Helmut Newton, Irving Penn, and Deborah Turbeville. July 10-14. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—**WILLIAM CLAXTON,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through July 16. . . . **WILLIAM GEDNEY,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through July 31. . . . **JAMES KARALES,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through July 31. . . . **RAY K. METZKER,** Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930. Through Aug. 13. . . . **JUDITH JOY ROSS,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through Aug. 27. . . . **EZRA STOLLER** and **HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON,** Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300. Through Aug. 13 and Aug. 31, respectively. . . . **WALTER WEINTZ,** United Nations Building lobby. 963-1234. Open daily, 9 to 5; through July 9.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and the Dahesh Museum.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

"The Peony Pavilion"—The Lincoln Center Festival's plans to present this twenty-hour Ming-dynasty Chinese opera evaporated last summer as the production became a shuttlecock in a game of international diplomatic posturing. Now it arrives, a year later, presented in three complete cycles of six three-and-a-quarter-hour episodes. The first cycle takes place this week. (LaGuardia High School, Amsterdam Ave. at 65th St. July 7 at 6:30, July 8 at 7, July 9 at 4 and 8:30, and July 10 at 2 and 7. For information about tickets, call 875-5030.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—As part of Lincoln Center Festival 99, Kurt Masur leads the orchestra in all five of Beethoven's piano concertos, with Emanuel Ax as the soloist, at Avery Fisher Hall. July 7: The Concerto No. 1, plus Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings. . . . ¶ July 10: The Concerto No. 2 and Dvořák's Symphony No. 8. . . . ¶ July 12: The Concerto No. 3, in addition to Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2 (the "Little Russian"). (875-5030. Evenings at 8. The Beethoven survey continues through July 15.)

Washington Square Music Festival—Henry Schuman leads the Festival Orchestra in Vivaldi's E-Minor Bassoon Concerto (RV 484, featuring Dennis Godburn) as well as in Beethoven's Violin Concerto (with Eriko Sato) and his Symphony No. 4. (Washington Square Park. July 13 at 8. No tickets necessary. In case of rain, the concert will take place at New York University Theatre, 35 W. 4th St.)

RECITALS

"Music in the Garden"—String trios by Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, played by Uli Speth and David Wallace (violinists) and Allen Alexander (cellist), open this outdoor series, which continues weekly through July 28. (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. July 7 at 7:15. Admission by contribution.)

Arcata String Quartet—Performing Beethoven's Quartet in D Major (Op. 18, No. 3) and E-Flat Major (Op. 74). (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. July 8 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

"The American Century"—The Whitney Museum of American Art is spending the summer offering a historical panorama of American art and culture from the first half of the twentieth century. Since the show's curator, Barbara Haskell, has left as few stones as possible unturned, it comes as no surprise that she has included some musical asides from members of the American Symphony Orchestra (which her husband, Leon Botstein, directs). The first of six weekly hour-long concerts comprises works by Stephen Foster (by way of background to our century), Virgil Thomson, Roy Harris (his String Quartet No. 1), Arthur Foote (his "Night Music"), and Amy Beach, performed by flutist Laura Conwesser, violinists Joel Pitchon and Patricia Davis, violist Calvin Wiersma, and cellist Roger Shell. (Madison Ave. at 75th St. July 8 at 6:30. No tickets required beyond exhibition admission; for more information, call 570-3676.)

BARGEMUSIC—July 8 at 7:30 and July 11 at 2: Presenting two divertimentos by Mozart, a duet for cello and double bass by Rossini, and Dvořák's G-Major String Quintet. . . . ¶ July 9 at 7:30: Violinist Carmit Zori, violinist and violist Robert Rinehart, double-bassist Peter Lloyd, and harpsichordist Robert Wolinsky offer an evening of Baroque music which includes trio sonatas by Bach and Telemann. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

SUMMERGARDEN—The Museum of Modern Art's annual summer series of twentieth-century music, which focusses this year on women composers, continues with chamber works by Thea Musgrave, Barbara Kolb, and Joan Tower, among others. (Sculpture Garden, Museum of Modern Art, 14 W. 54th St. July 9-10 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

"SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND"—Flutist Mindy Kaufman, violinist Anton Miller, violist Zvi Hillel, cellist Iris Regev, and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform a concert that comprises a flute quartet (in G Major) and a piano quartet (in E-Flat Major) by Mozart and Benjamin Godard's Fantasy for Flute and Piano. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. July 11 at noon.)

JEROME ROSE—The pianist kicks off a two-week keyboard workshop at Mannes College of Music with a recital that comprises Beethoven's Sonata in E-Flat Major (Op. 31, No. 3), three pieces from Liszt's "Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses," and, with soprano Alexandra Gatskevich, several of Pauline Viardot's song settings based on Chopin mazurkas. (150 W. 85th St. July 11 at 3. Tickets at the door.)

NEW YORK CHAMBER SYMPHONY BRASS PLAYERS—An octet performs Renaissance and Baroque works by Giovanni Gabrieli, Bach, and others. (Central Park Band Shell, mid-Park at 72nd St. July 13 at 7:30. No tickets necessary. In case of questionable weather, call 262-6927.)

OUT OF TOWN

(A selective listing of festival events within a reasonable drive from New York City. Call the presenters for complete schedules.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL—The Vermeer String Quartet performs two separate all-Beethoven programs. July 9 at 8: The String Quartets in F Major (Op. 18, No. 1, and Op. 135), plus the Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major (Op. 16, with Peter Frankl assisting). . . . ¶ July 10 at 8: The Quartet in A Minor (Op. 132) and String Quintet in C Major (Op. 29, with violist Kazuhide Isomura). (Route 44, Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000.)

OPERA FESTIVAL OF NEW JERSEY—July 9 at 8: "Don Giovanni." . . . ¶ July 10 at 8: Dominick Argento's "Postcard from Morocco." . . . ¶ July 11 at 2: "Madama Butterfly." (McCarter Theatre, 91 University Pl., Princeton, N.J. 609-683-8000.)

CARAMOOR—July 9 at 8: The Ying String Quartet plays quartets by Copland (his Two Pieces, written in the nineteen-twenties), Barber, Jeffrey Beal, and Dvořák (in F Major, Op. 96, the "American"). . . . ¶ July 10 at 8: A Brahms concert in which Peter Oundjian conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's in the Double Concerto (with violinist Joseph Lin and cellist Alexis Pia Gerlach), Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Anton Kuerti), and Symphony No. 2. . . . ¶ July 11 at 4: The Emerson String Quartet, pianists Anton Kuerti and Wu Han, and several wind players join to perform chamber music by Beethoven. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

TANGLEWOOD—July 9 at 8:30: Seiji Ozawa leads the Boston Symphony in Beethoven's Symphonies No. 6 and No. 7. . . . ¶ July 10 at 8:30: André Previn conducts the Boston Symphony in a suite from his opera "A Streetcar Named Desire" (featuring soprano Susannah Glanville and tenor Anthony Dean Griffey), in addition to Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro" Overture and his Violin Concerto No. 3 (with Itzhak Perlman). . . . ¶ July 11 at 2:30: John Williams conducts the Boston Symphony in the première of his "For Seiji!," Mendelssohn's E-Minor Violin Concerto and Sarasate's "Carmen" Fantasy (both with Gil Shaham), and Bernstein's "Symphonic Dances from 'West Side Story.' " . . . ¶ July 13 at 8:30: Songs by Schumann (his "Frauenliebe und -leben"), Brahms, Grieg, and Wolf, performed by soprano Barbara Bonney and pianist Warren Jones. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA—July 10 at 8: "Rigoletto." . . . ¶ July 11 at 2: "The Abduction from the Seraglio," in English. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS—July 10 at 8: Ursula Oppens performs four of Beethoven's piano sonatas (Op. 10, No. 3; Op. 28; Op. 101; and Op. 109), as well as pieces by Conlon Nancarrow. . . . ¶ July 11 at 3: The Miami String Quartet plays quartets by Shostakovich (his famous Eighth), Robert Starer (his First), and Borodin (his Second). (Woodstock, N.Y. 914-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN—July 10 at 8: The New Black Eagle Jazz Band, playing in the traditional New Orleans style. . . . ¶ July 11 at 3: The St. Petersburg String Quartet plays Haydn's Quartet in C Major (Op. 76, No. 3, the "Emperor"); the Leontovich String Quartet assists in the performance of Shostakovich's Two Pieces for String Octet and Mendelssohn's Octet. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

WORLD TIBET DAY—Four days after the Dalai Lama's sixty-fourth birthday, Tibetan lamas join local politicians and academics for an afternoon of Tibetan culture. Congressmen Benjamin Gilman and Donald Payne, who sit on the House's International Relations Committee, and Robert Thurman, president of Tibet House, talk about the occupied region. Tibetan pop star Dadon and singer Arlo Guthrie will perform, and there will be mandalas, carpet weaving, and calligraphy demonstrations as well. (East Meadow, Central Park, Fifth Ave. at 97th St. July 10, from noon to 5. For more information, call 718-323-7670.)

READINGS—July 7 at 7: By Ben Schrank, from his novel, "Miracle Man," Julia Slavin, from her short-story collection, "The Woman Who Cut Off Her Leg at the Maidstone Club," and Colson Whitehead, from his novel, "The Intuitionist." (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ July 8 at 7: By Scott Anderson, from "The Man Who Tried to Save the World," his book about American aid worker Fred Cuny, who vanished in Chechnya in 1995, and by Douglas Century, from "Street Kingdom: Five Years with the Franklin Avenue Posse," his account of life on the streets of Brooklyn. (Zinc Bar, 90 W. Houston St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ July 8 at 7:30: By Ken Foster, from his short-story collection, "The Kind I'm Likely to Get." (Barnes & Noble, 4 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ July 11 at 7: By Jonathan Ames, from his novel, "The Extra Man," and by Vendela Vida, from her account of female adolescence, "Girls on the Verge: Debutante Dips, Gang Drive-bys and Other Initiations." (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.)

TALK—July 12 at 6:30: Hugh Sidey, former Washington bureau chief of *Time*, talks about covering the Presidency. (Newseum/NY, Madison Ave. at 57th St. No tickets necessary.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Grass

IN 1997, twelve-year-old Ryan Tripp rode a lawnmower 3,116 miles, from Salt Lake City to the White House, where his offer to cut the executive lawn was declined by the National Park Service. The broad context of Ryan's mower trek—so symbolic of America's ardent relationship with its compulsively cultivated and shaved green landscape—is the subject of **A MAN'S TURF** (Clarkson Potter), Warren Schultz's just-published omnibus of American lawn how-to, horticulture, and history. Schultz explains that while grass had its origins in the Mesozoic era, it wasn't until this century that familiar varieties such as Kentucky bluegrass, creeping fescue, and perennial ryegrass turned America into a coast-to-coast savanna.

In **THE LAWN: A HISTORY OF AN AMERICAN OBSESSION** (Smithsonian), Virginia Scott Jenkins shows that this uniquely American landscape form is not a native one: indigenous New World grasses were munched into extinction by the colonists' Old World livestock, and the very concept of the lawn was borrowed from the romantic English parks of Capability Brown and from the French *tapis vert.* But gradual suburbanization and the shaming tactics of appearance-minded neighbors led America to become completely besotted with grass—and lawn care. Needless to say, Americans have developed increasingly sophisticated grass-cutting machinery; **INSIDE JOHN DEERE** (MBI) is Rod Beemer and Chester Peterson, Jr.,'s account of how fleets of iconic lawn-green and dandelion-yellow machines are built and pumped out of Deere's ultramodern Tractor Works, in Waterloo, Iowa.

Just as every lawn has its crabgrass, so, too, does lawn culture have its critics. In his keynote essay in **THE AMERICA LAWN** (Princeton Architectural Press) architectural historian Georges Teysso registers the objections of the "freedo lawn" movement, which favors the return of the flowery mead. The head topics addressed in this colorful anthology—the lawn as Second World Wa homefront, as velvety playing field, an as symbol of the "suburban ideal an its latent nightmare"—all indicate tha the roots of grass in America go deepe than what's out there in the back yar

Books.
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Dive In...
The Reading is Fine

THE FALCON AT THE PORTAL

by Elizabeth Peters

Amelia Peabody is in Egypt digging for artifacts, but finds trouble instead. A member of her family has been accused of selling relics to fund a nationalist revolution. Amelia must use her sleuthing prowess to keep her family name clean in this ingenious mystery from the bestselling author of *The Ape Who Guards the Balance*. (Avon Twilight)

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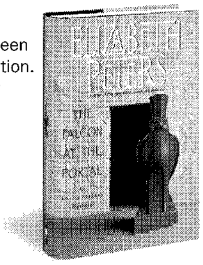

MY RUSSIAN

by Deirdre McNamer

To escape her suburban family existence, Francesca Woodbridge travels to Greece. But driven by a consuming "desire for desire," she goes even further, fabricating an entirely new identity. Irrevocably altering her life, Francesca chooses passion over complacency—no matter the consequences. (Houghton Mifflin)

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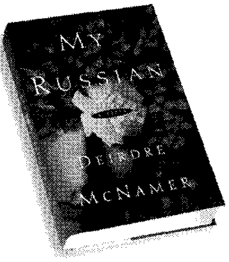

A GOD IN RUINS

by Leon Uris

The bestselling author of *Redemption*, *Trinity* and *Exodus* delivers a powerful novel of the politics that rule our governments and the passions that rule our lives. Spanning the decades from World War II to 2008, *A God in Ruins* illuminates the major crisis facing America at the dawn of the new millennium. (HarperCollins)

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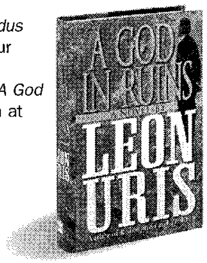

THE EMPEROR'S GENERAL

by James Webb

Former Assistant Secretary of Defense James Webb, author of *Fields of Fire*, combines real history with exceptional storytelling to explore the heart, soul and ego of General Douglas MacArthur. From the vantage point of a fictional aide-de-camp, we see not only how the General became an "American Caesar," but also share in the narrator's own bitter coming of age in MacArthur's shadow. (Broadway)

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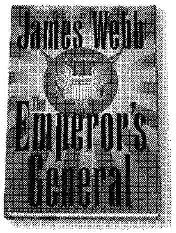

A DANGEROUS FRIEND

by Ward Just

In the new novel from the acclaimed author of *Echo House* (a 1997 National Book Award nominee), an idealistic American, Sydney Parade, travels to Vietnam on a civilian mission to effect democratic change in 1965. But Sydney must make some tough choices—choices that reflect the tragic conflict that engulf the country. (Houghton Mifflin)

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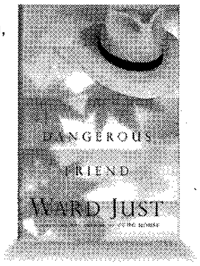

CLOSE RANGE: WYOMING STORIES

by Annie Proulx

Annie Proulx's masterful language and fierce love of Wyoming are evident in this collection of stories about loneliness, quick violence and misplaced desire. The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Shipping News* achieves absolute authenticity of character, place and plot. (Scribner)

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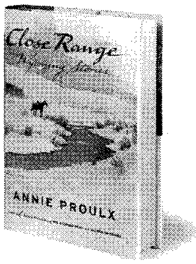

THE REDHUNTER

by William F. Buckley, Jr.

As an intellectual who cast his lot with Joe McCarthy in the 1950s, William F. Buckley is well suited to examine the senator's life. *The Redhunter* reveals McCarthy both as the first defense in our country's stand against the Soviets and as a monomaniacal demagogue capable of unparalleled treachery. (Little, Brown)

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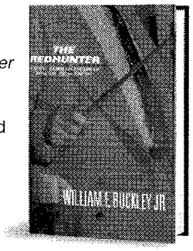

TURN OF THE CENTURY

by Kurt Andersen

In his debut novel, *New Yorker* columnist and *Spy* magazine cofounder Kurt Andersen introduces a Manhattan couple who find that greed, envy, lust, and selling-out are still on the menu for the next millennium. *Turn of the Century* is an uproarious and on-target morality tale. (Random House)

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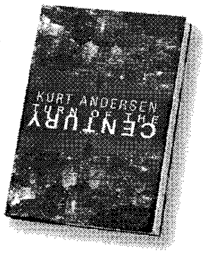

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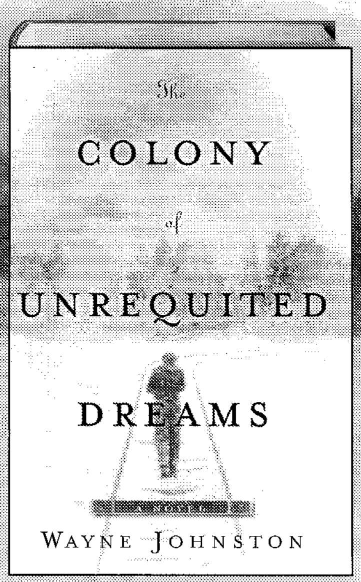

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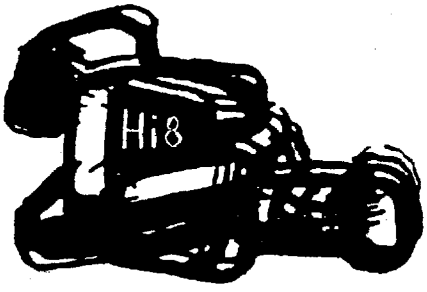


THE MOVIES

OPENING

American Pie—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 9. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Union Square, and Waverly.)

Arlington Road—A conspiracy thriller, with Jeff Bridges, Tim Robbins, and Joan Cusack; directed by Mark Pellington. Opening July 9.

Autumn Tale—Eric Rohmer's latest film, about a widow (Béatrice Romand) and two friends who try to find a man for her. In French. Opening July 9. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Defying Gravity—Three college fraternity brothers come of age. Directed by John Keitel. Opening July 9. (Quad Cinema.)

The Dinner Game—A comedy, written and directed by Francis Veber, with Thierry Lhermitte, Jacques Villeret, and Daniel Prevost. In French. Opening July 9. (Paris.)

Late August, Early September—Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening July 7.

FILM NOTES

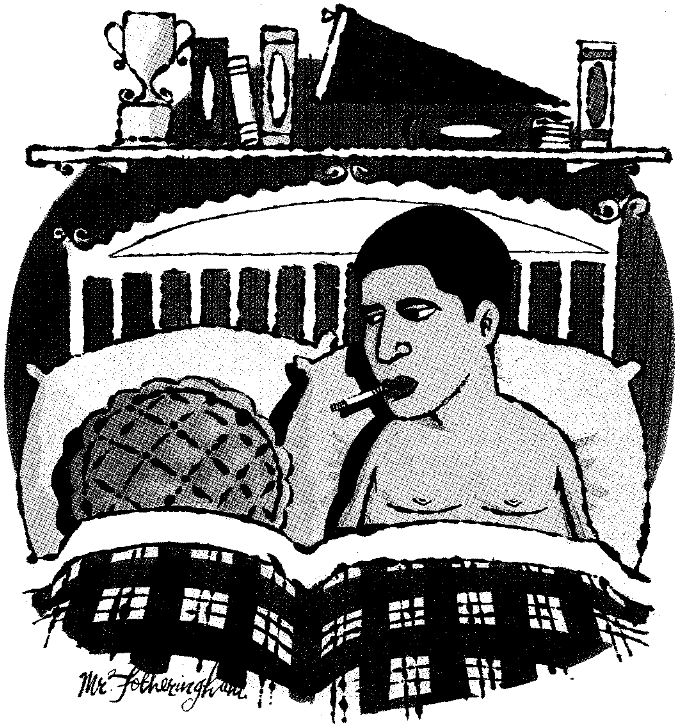
(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me—A crud classic, featuring the return of Mike Myers as the grinningly fatuous Brit-twit spy who is so available for sex that he marches naked down the steps of a posh hotel, rolling his shoulders and smirking at every woman who passes by. Ostensibly a parody of the Bond movies, the Austin Powers comedies are closer to a celebration of the redeeming power of shamelessness. But while acknowledging what Myers has added to the world in the way of good cheer, let us also note that this is a movie in which a dwarf bites the star in the crotch and then gets swung around and bashed into a pole. There are depressing scatological jokes, candy-colored mod sets, goony mock-sci-fi scenes, and too many exuberantly bad ideas that wear down fast. With Robert Wagner, Rob Lowe, and Heather Graham. Directed by Jay Roach.—*David Denby* (7/5/99) (Cinema II, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Buena Vista Social Club—In 1996, the blues guitarist Ry Cooder gathered together some wonderful Cuban musicians in their seventies and eighties for a successful recording project. Two years later, Cooder went back to Cuba, this time accompanied by cameras and the German director Wim Wenders, seeking out the men and women of Cuban music on the streets and in the old dance halls of Havana. The musicians still look great, play beautifully, and exude a stirring seriousness and dignity; the movie comes closer to pure happiness than anything else in the theatres at the moment.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Five Graves to Cairo (1943)—Erich von Stroheim struts his stuff as Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in an ingeniously plotted melodrama about why the Germans lost at El Alamein. Billy Wilder, who directed and, with Charles Brackett, also wrote the script, must have had something a little grander in mind; the cleverness lacks lustre.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum 2; July 7.)

The General's Daughter—A classic case of Hollywood hypocrisy and ineptitude. On an Army base in the South, investigators Madeleine Stowe and John Travolta (acting with his belly and chin) try to solve the murder-rape of an Army captain—the general's daughter. The movie expresses its outrage over violence against women by showing the victim naked and spread-eagled again and again. The lurid narrative is so disorganized that even one's



Opening July 9, Jason Biggs in "American Pie."

lowest appetites remain unsatisfied. With James Cromwell, Timothy Hutton, and James Woods. Directed by Simon West and written by Christopher Bertolini and William Goldman, from a novel by Nelson DeMille.—*D.D.* (Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

AN IDEAL HUSBAND—A little more than a hundred years since its première, Oscar Wilde's languorous play has been newly adapted for the screen, with a few superfluous nudges to remind us that we are once again facing a fin de siècle. The plot pits dastardly blackmail against upright honor, and one is scandalized, as ever, to find that honor wins the fight. (Wilde as moralizer, rather than amused moralist, is never a pretty sight.) The radiant Mrs. Cheveley (Julianne Moore) turns up in London and unearths a spot of compromising dirt from the past of Sir Robert Chiltern (Jeremy Northam), a tediously unsullied politician. He has a perfect wife (Cate Blanchett), an irritating sister (Minnie Driver), and a friend called Lord Goring (Rupert Everett), who shines like a naughty deed in a good world. So automatic is one's sympathy for Goring, and for Everett's low-toned, cunning performance, that the rest of the story, and most of the cast, feels thin and strained by comparison. The director, Oliver Parker, tries to correct the imbalance by pushing Wilde's comedy of manners toward farce; this results in a grossly cheerful finale that bears all the grace of an amateur dramatics night.—*Anthony Lane* (7/5/99) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)

THE IRON HORSE (1924)—John Ford's mammoth, rambunctious frontier romance sets the building of the transcontinental railway around the murder of a visionary surveyor by a white man posing as an Indian. The victim's son (George O'Brien) gets to avenge his father's death, win his sweetheart (Madge Bellamy), and save the railroad simultaneously. The picture is absurd—and enjoyable. Ford came up with so many spectacular or spirited bits of business, including appearances by the likes of Wild Bill Hickock (Jack Padjan) and Buffalo Bill Cody (George Waggner), that he created the celluloid equivalent of a Wild West show. Many of the hallmarks of Ford's later career appear here in vaudevillian form: the belief in Manifest Destiny, the love of the Irish (at the expense of shirking Italian co-workers), the idealization of Abraham Lincoln, and the balance of fear and respect for the Indians (the baddest bad guy is that white fellow in redface). Silent.—*Michael Sragow* (American Museum of the Moving Image; July 10.)

LATE AUGUST, EARLY SEPTEMBER—The director of "Irma Vep," Olivier Assayas, returns with a simple but powerful tale about a group of Parisians and their intense relationships. The young actors—François Cluzet (as a dying writer), Mathieu Amalric (his best friend), and Jeanne Balibar, Virginie Ledoyen, and Mia Hansen-Løve (their various girlfriends)—turn in realistic and varied performances that make the film a convincing, if familiar, story of love and loss. The movie is episodic (it's told in six parts), but instead of lurching from one point to the next Assayas's relaxed camera style gives the viewer the feeling of eavesdropping, and the transitions are effortless. In French.—*Bruce Diones* (Film Forum; starting July 7.)

MY SON THE FANATIC—The great Indian actor Om Puri, who has a face like a serried mountain range, gives a memorable performance as Parvez, a quiet Pakistani taxi-driver living in a dreary northern-England industrial town. For years, the assimilated Parvez has worked to provide for his family, only to have his son suddenly reject Western values and then compound the insult by inviting a group of hungry fundamentalist hangers-on into the house. The writer, Hanif Kureishi, and the director, Udayan Prasad, work the culture clash for comedy and for anguish, too—Parvez, waking up emotionally, falls in love with one of the prostitutes (Rachel Griffiths) he's been driving around, and the fundamentalists, including Parvez's son, go berserk. With Stellan Skarsgård as a brutal German businessman.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

NOTTING HILL—The first outing for screenwriter Richard Curtis and leading man Hugh Grant since their collaboration on "Four Weddings and a Funeral." The new movie is less inclined to tomfoolery; the gags are quieter and more sparsely planted. Grant plays a London bookseller named William Thacker; Julia Roberts plays Anna Scott, a movie star who wanders into his store. The two of them fall in love, then out of love, and so on; you feel lulled rather than excited by the sway of the plot, and Curtis's essentially benign attitude—most of the characters are charming but screwy, and they get along just fine—seems to tame the director, Roger Michell.—*A.L.* (6/7/99) (Art Greenwich Twin, Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 34th Street Showplace.)

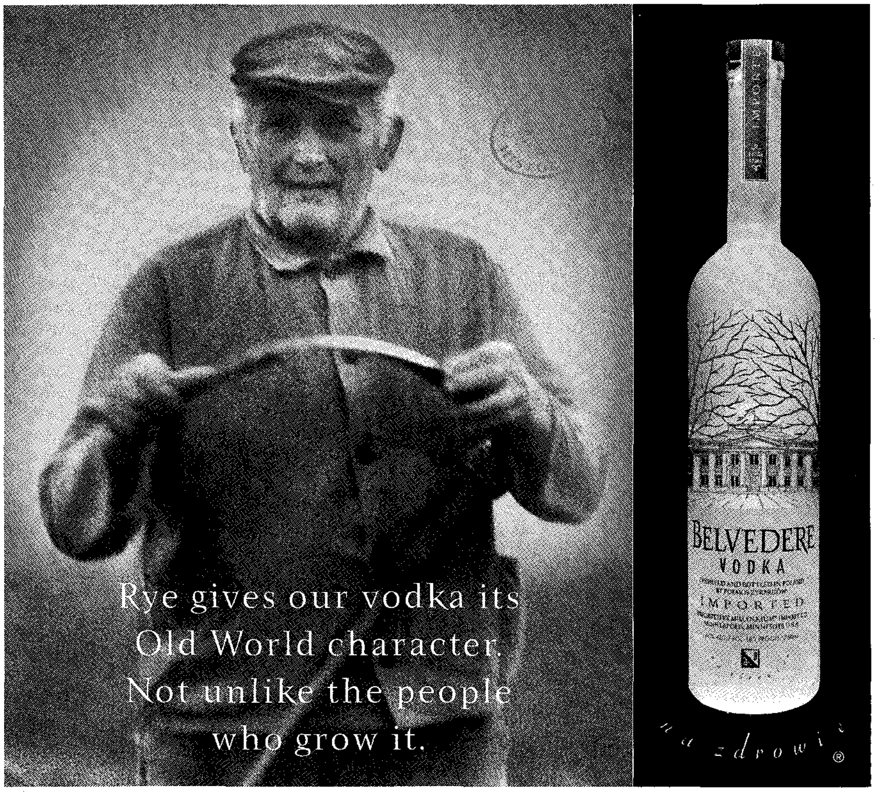
THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE (1972)—An ocean liner turns turtle, and the logistics of getting out of an upside-down ship are fairly entertaining; the script is the true cataclysm in this waterlogged "Grand Hotel." With Gene Hackman, Ernest Borgnine, Stella Stevens, Red Buttons, and Carol Lynley. There's also a lot of Shelley Winters. Ronald Neame directed, with dull efficiency.—*P.K.* (A Different Light Bookstore; July 11.)

THE RED VIOLIN—Joshua Bell's impassioned violin soars above a dark matting of strings in John Corigliano's soundtrack score—the most valuable element to emerge from this grandiose French-Canadian project, an omnibus film that chronicles the life of a great violin made in Cremona in the late seventeenth century. Unfortunately, the director-screenwriter team, François Girard and Don McKellar, don't seem to have worked out a coherent idea of what the violin means to each of its owners.—*D.D.* (6/14/99) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Beekman, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, and Union Square.)

REGRET TO INFORM—Barbara Sonnenborn's personal, haunting documentary concerning her journey to Vietnam on the twentieth anniversary of her husband's death is a deeply affecting look at the widows that the war left behind on both sides. Sonnenborn intercuts her frank interviews with horrific war footage and her own husband's voice (he sent her a tape that she received only after his death). Beautifully photographed, with an elegiac Vietnamese soundtrack, at times the film approaches a poetry that few documentaries of this kind have managed to achieve.—*B.D.* (Art Greenwich Twin.)

SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT (1986)—The voluptuous, easygoing Nola (Tracy Camila Johns), a graphic designer who lives in the black bohemian world of Brooklyn, is happily juggling three lovers when she's faced by a mock crisis: each of the three men wants to be her one and only. That's the premise of this quick-witted sex comedy written, directed, and edited by the twenty-nine-year-old Spike Lee, who shot it in 16 mm. in twelve days, on an almost nonexistent budget. Nola, her three lovers, and her family and friends explain themselves directly to the camera, and the film's basic set is Nola's bed; you can't shoot a movie much cheaper or faster than that—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; July 10.)

SOUTH PARK: BIGGER, LONGER & UNCUT—Trey Parker and Matt Stone's television-cartoon phenomenon about four potty-mouthed boys and the cold mountain town they live in gets a big, splashy, singing-and-dancing, R-rated feature-film début—and it's pretty damn fat-ass funny. Parker and Stone's animation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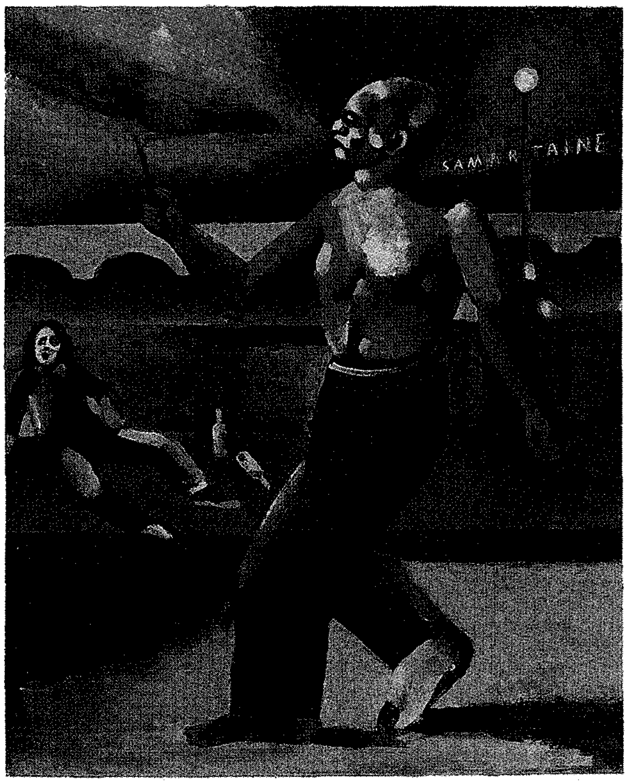
style—brightly colored cutouts on minimally painted backgrounds—owes a whole lot to Colorforms, and its very cheesiness is endearing. The movie, basically a rant against the motion-picture rating system, features more foul language than "Fritz the Cat," and the exploits of Stan, Kyle, Kenny, and Cartman—who are trying to save South Park from a conflicted Devil (his boyfriend, Saddam Hussein, doesn't appreciate him)—are really just an excuse for some wonderful musical numbers that parody both Disney and Broadway. (The film opens just like "Oklahoma!" and has a show-stopping number sung by the Devil called "Up There" that kicks "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"'s butt.)—*B.D.* (East 85th Street, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, State, and Village Theatre VII.)



At Film Forum, Léos Carax's "The Lovers on the Bridge."

Stagecoach (1939)—Perhaps the most likable of all Westerns, a movie that has just about everything—adventure, romance, chivalry—and all of it very simple and traditional. John Ford directed, and the cast includes John Wayne, at his most appealing as the Ringo Kid, Claire Trevor, as the good-hearted whore, Dallas, and skinny-faced John Carradine, as the gambler.—*P.K.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; July 11.)

Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace—It has been more than twenty years since George Lucas directed a movie. Amid the fuss that has attended his return to the fray, no one seems to have wondered whether he was up to the task. With this film, Lucas demonstrates two facts: one, that he has kept abreast of the recent leaps in special effects, and two, that he hasn't a clue what to do with all the nondigital figures, otherwise known as "people." Three fine actors were lured into this farrago: Ewan McGregor plays the young Obi-Wan Kenobi, Liam Neeson is his Jedi mentor, Natalie Portman plays a teen-age queen, and all of them look as if they were recently abused by robots.—*A.L.* (5/24/99) (East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

Summer of Sam—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII.)

Tarzan—Raised by apes, the new, animated Tarzan walks with his heavy shoulders leaning forward and his knuckles dragging along the ground. He's the most apelike of Tarzans: animation, which Edgar Rice Burroughs's material seems to have been waiting for, frees the Disney filmmakers to mix animal and human characteristics without embarrassment. And it frees them to use nature not as a static background with lots of available vines but as a seethingly active habitat. Glen Keane, the chief animator of "Tarzan," has said that he was inspired by watching his skateboarding son. This Tarzan doesn't swing from trees but courses rapidly from branch to branch, glen to glen—he treats the tree canopy and the thick undergrowth below as if they were the swells and hollows of the ocean. At its best, the movie is an exhilarating, surf-topping ride. With Minnie Driver providing the voice of a deliciously flirtatious Jane.—*D.D.* (7/5/99) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, Guild, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Village East Cinemas.)

Wild Wild West—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Astor Plaza, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

Written on the Wind (1957)—A Texas oil millionaire (Robert Stack) sweeps a secretary (Lauren Bacall) off her feet, marries her, and then gets to wondering whether the baby that she's going to have is really his or if it's the child of his best friend, a geologist (Rock Hudson). The Texan's nympho sister (Dorothy Malone) encourages his suspicions while trying to trap the geologist. The director, Douglas Sirk, shows his talent for whipping up sour, stylized soap operas in posh settings.—*P.K.* (Film Forum 2; starting July 9.)

ALSO PLAYING

AFTER LIFE: BAM Rose Cinemas and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **ANALYZE THIS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BESIEGED:** Paris, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **BIG DADDY:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, Waverly, and Union Square. . . . **BROKEN VESSELS:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE DAY OF THE BEAST:** Cinema Village. . . . **THE DREAMLIFE OF ANGELS** (reviewed in our issue of 4/5/99): Quad Cinema. . . . **EDGE OF SEVENTEEN:** Quad Cinema. . . . **ELECTION** (4/26 & 5/3/99): 59th Street East Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **ENTRAPMENT:** Criterion Center. . . . **INSTINCT** (6/14/99): Union Square. . . . **THE KING OF MASKS:** Cinema Village. . . . **LIFE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LIMBO:** 64th and 2nd and Village East Cinemas. . . . **LOVE ETC.:** The Screening Room. . . . **THE LOVERS ON THE BRIDGE:** Film Forum. . . . **THE MATRIX** (4/26 & 5/3/99): Criterion Center and Union Square. . . . **THE MUMMY** (5/10/99): Union Square. . . . **NEVER BEEN KISSED:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **RUN LOLA RUN:** Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE** (12/21/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **TEA WITH MUSSOLINI:** Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **TWIN DRAGONS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **XIU XIU: THE SENT DOWN GIRL:** Cinema Village. . . . **A WALK ON THE MOON** (4/12/99): 34th Street Showplace. . . . **WHEN LOVE COMES:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE WINSLOW BOY** (5/17/99): BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A program of films directed by or with Erich von Stroheim. July 7: "Five Graves to Cairo" (†) and "Crimson Romance" (1934, Frank Strayer). . . . July 8: "The Merry-Go-Round" (1923, von Stroheim and Rupert Julien) and "Hello, Sister!" (1933). . . . ¶ From July 9 (except July 12): "Written on the Wind" (†). . . . ¶ Harold Lloyd films. July 12: "For Heaven's Sake" (1926) and "The Sin of Harold Diddlebock" (1947).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of early Stanley Kubrick films. July 8 at 2:30 and July 9 at 8: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964). . . . July 8 at 6 and July 11 at 2: "Lolita" (1962). . . . July 9 at 2:30: "Spartacus" (1965 version). . . . July 9 at 6: "The Killing" (1956). . . . July 10 at 2: "Paths of Glory" (1957). . . . July 10 at 5: "Spartacus" (1991 version). . . . ¶ A program of films distributed by the Strand Releasing Company over the past ten years. July 8 at 6: "All the Vermeers in New York" (1990, Jon Jost). . . . July 9 at 3: "The Delta" (1996, Ira Sachs). . . . July 9 at 6 and July 10 at 2:30: "Clean, Shaven" (1993, Lodge H. Kerrigan). . . . July 9 at 8: "Super 8½" (1994, Bruce LaBruce). . . . July 10 at 5 and July 12 at 6: "Crush" (1992, Alison Maclean). . . . July 11 at 2:30: "Inside" (1996, Arthur Penn). . . . July 11 at 5: "Pink Narcissus" (1971, James Bidgood). . . . July 13 at 6: "Macho Dancer" (1988, Lino Brocka). . . . ¶ A program of films directed by George Cukor. July 11 at 5: "Our Betters" (1933). . . . July 12 at 2:30 and July 13 at 6: "Camille" (1936). . . . July 12 at 6: "Born Yesterday" (1950). . . . July 13 at 2:30: "It Should Happen to You" (1953).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of films directed by Max Ophuls. July 7 at 1 and 5, July 8 at 3 and 7, and July 9 at 5: "La Plaisir" (1951; in French). . . . July 7 at 3, July 8 at 5, and July 9 at 1: "The Trouble with Money" (1936; in Dutch). . . . July 7 at 7, July 8 at 1 and 9, and July 9 at 3 and 7: "La Ronde" (1950; in French). . . . July 10-11 at 4 and 8:15: "Lola Montès" (1955; in French). . . . July 10-11 at 6:15: "No Tomorrow" (1939; in French). . . . July 12 at 1 and 9: "Yoshiwara" (1937; in French). . . . July 12 at 3 and 7 and July 13 at 3: "Werther" (1938; in French). . . . July 12 at 5 and July 13 at 1: "Divine" (1935; in French). . . . ¶ July 10-11 at 2: "Charlotte's Web" (1973, Charles A. Nichols and Iwao Takamato).

BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—July 7-8 at 4, 6:45, and 9:20: "Days of Heaven" (1978, Terrence Malick). . . . ¶ A program of films by Spike Lee. July 9 at 4, 6:45, and 9:20: "Jungle Fever" (1991). . . . July 10 at 1:30, 4, 6:45, and 9:20: "She's Gotta Have It" (†). . . . July 11 at 1:30, 4, 6:45, and 9:20 "Mo' Better Blues" (1990). . . . ¶ Films by Robert Bresson. July 12 at 4, 6:45, and 9:20 "The Devil Probably" (1977; in French). . . . July 13 at 4, 6:45, and 9:20 "L'Argent" (1982; in French).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35t Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)— program of John Ford Westerns. July 10 a 2: "Straight Shooting" (1917; silent, wit live music by Jon Sperney). . . . July 10 at "Hell Bent" (1918; silent, with live musi by Sperney). . . . July 10 at 4:30: "The Iro

Horse" (†). . . . July 11 at 2: "Stagecoach" (†). . . . ¶ July 11 at 4: "Directed by John Ford" (1972, Peter Bogdanovich).

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with coming attractions, trailers, and cartoons. The feature on July 12 will be "Gilda" (1946, Charles Vidor). (For rain-date information, call 512-5700.)

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—July 13 at 12:30, 3:30, and 6:30: "Elena et les Hommes" (1956, Jean Renoir; in French). . . . July 13 at 9: "Mademoiselle" (1966, Tony Richardson).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On July 11 at 7, the feature will be "The Poseidon Adventure" (†).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—July 8 at 7: "Easy Rider" (1969, Dennis Hopper). . . . July 8 at 9: "The Harder They Come" (1973, Perry Henzell). . . . July 9 at 7 and 10:30: "Reefer Madness" (1936, Louis Gasnier). . . . July 9 at 8:30: "Up in Smoke" (1978, Lou Adler). . . . July 10 at 7 and 9:30: "Cleopatra" (1969, Michel Auder). . . . July 10 at 8: "Dazed and Confused" (1993, Richard Linklater). . . . July 10 at 10: "Slacker" (1991, Linklater). . . . July 11 at 7: "Panic in Needle Park" (1971, Jerry Schatzberg). . . . July 11 at 9:30: "The Addiction" (1995, Abel Ferrara).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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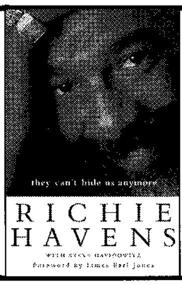

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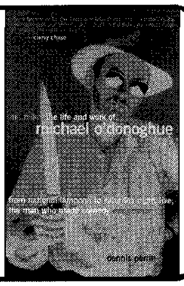

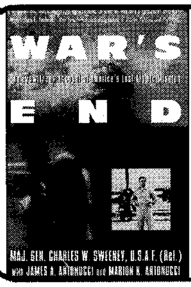
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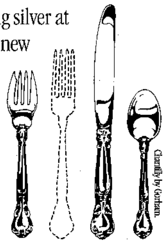
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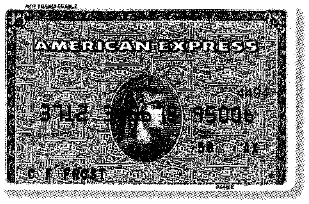

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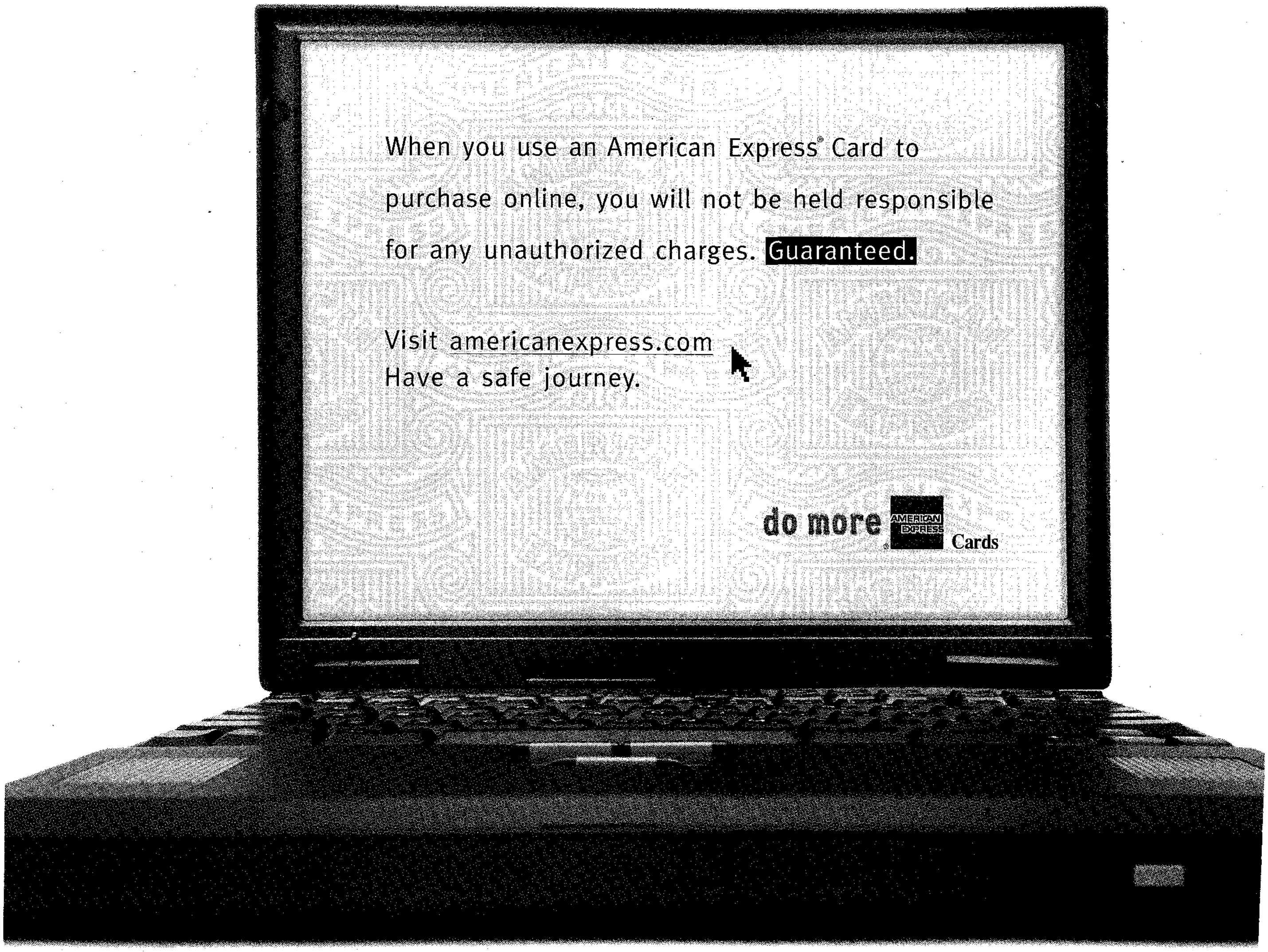

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

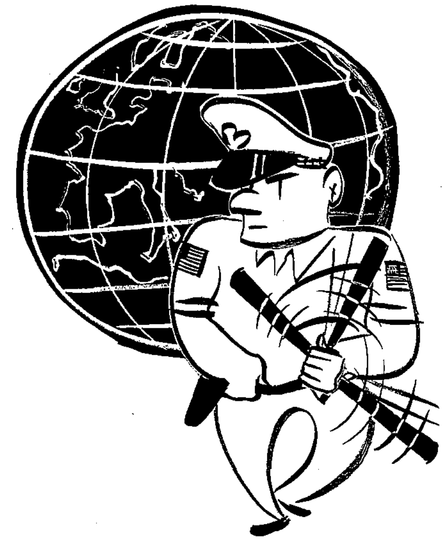
On patrol in the Kosovo precinct.

In 1950, after the United States sent troops into battle for the first time since the end of the Second World War, President Truman took to calling America's military defense of South Korea a "police action." This was a euphemism that made a lot of people angry. It was widely derided as mealymouthed, ignoble, or simply false. Some on the left saw Truman's phrase as an effort to criminalize one side of a civil conflict. Some on the right saw it as part of a sinister campaign to subsume the United States into a global superstate. And many—left, right, and center—recoiled from the term as a prettying-up of the slaughter of what was, by any common-sense understanding, a war, and a bloody one.

In truth, Truman's phrase was less any of these than it was the product of an uneasy mixture of idealism, prudence, and wishful thinking. Calling the Korean War a police action was aspirational, not descriptive. Yes, the American G.I.s who fought in Korea served under the United Nations flag, side by side with soldiers and medics from twenty other countries, including not only Britain and France but also Thailand and India. At bottom, though, the Korean War was an old-fashioned conflict among states, a proxy war fought against the background of big-power politics and the global struggle between liberalism and totalitarianism.

Now, a half century on, the United States has fought a war that actually was what the Korean War only pretended to be. No one has called the air war to drive Slobodan Milosevic's marauders out of Kosovo a police action. Perhaps there are still too many people around who remember the heat that Truman took for his choice of words. But a police action is exactly what it was.

Police power is something that is normally wielded within a state. Its effectiveness depends on monopolizing violence, but its legitimacy depends on nonviolence—on subordination to a liberal democratic political structure with enforceable rights. (Without that subordination, the police function gobbles up the state, and the state becomes a police state.) The checks on the police function are political, not military—checks and balances, not balances of power. The legitimacy of the police power also depends on the ability to use force precisely. In 1985, in Philadelphia, a police helicopter bombed a house occupied by an outlaw cult, and the resulting fire engulfed an entire neighborhood. Everyone recognized this as a catastrophe, deeply alien to the purposes and practices of policing. But the bombing of Belgrade was so accurate that it went seriously wrong only when the targeters made a mistake about an address, like a drug squad breaking down the wrong door.



Sovereignty in Europe is fluid right now. The various Continental structures—NATO, the European Union and its parliament, and so on—are still a few post offices short of constituting a true government, but Europe has come very far from being a congeries of independent states with clashing territorial and ideological ambitions. Europeanness is an increasingly viable identity, and Europe is an increasingly solid confederation, reminiscent in some ways of the early United States. It even has its own version of manifest destiny. Ultimately, as everyone agrees without quite saying so, the Balkans will be part of that confederation. They are certainly part of Europe, and now they are part of what confederated Europe, with American prodding, sees as its area of responsibility.

The Kosovo conflict had at least analogues of all the elements that distinguish a police action from a traditional war. Though NATO obviously did not possess a monopoly of force, its precision weapons, plus the enormous power it held in reserve, gave it something that came close. After a decade of vacillation, NATO at last committed itself to the proposition that mass slaughter is intolerable on Europe's home ground, even when that ground is technically beyond the jurisdiction of Europe's institutions. (The strength of those institutions, more than racism or cultural Eurocentrism, explains the difference in the international response to similar humanitarian outrages in Africa.) And the indictment of Milosevic by the Hague tribunal made the police model explicit.

It is clear, in retrospect, that President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright have conducted this episode wisely. Even the most widely criticized

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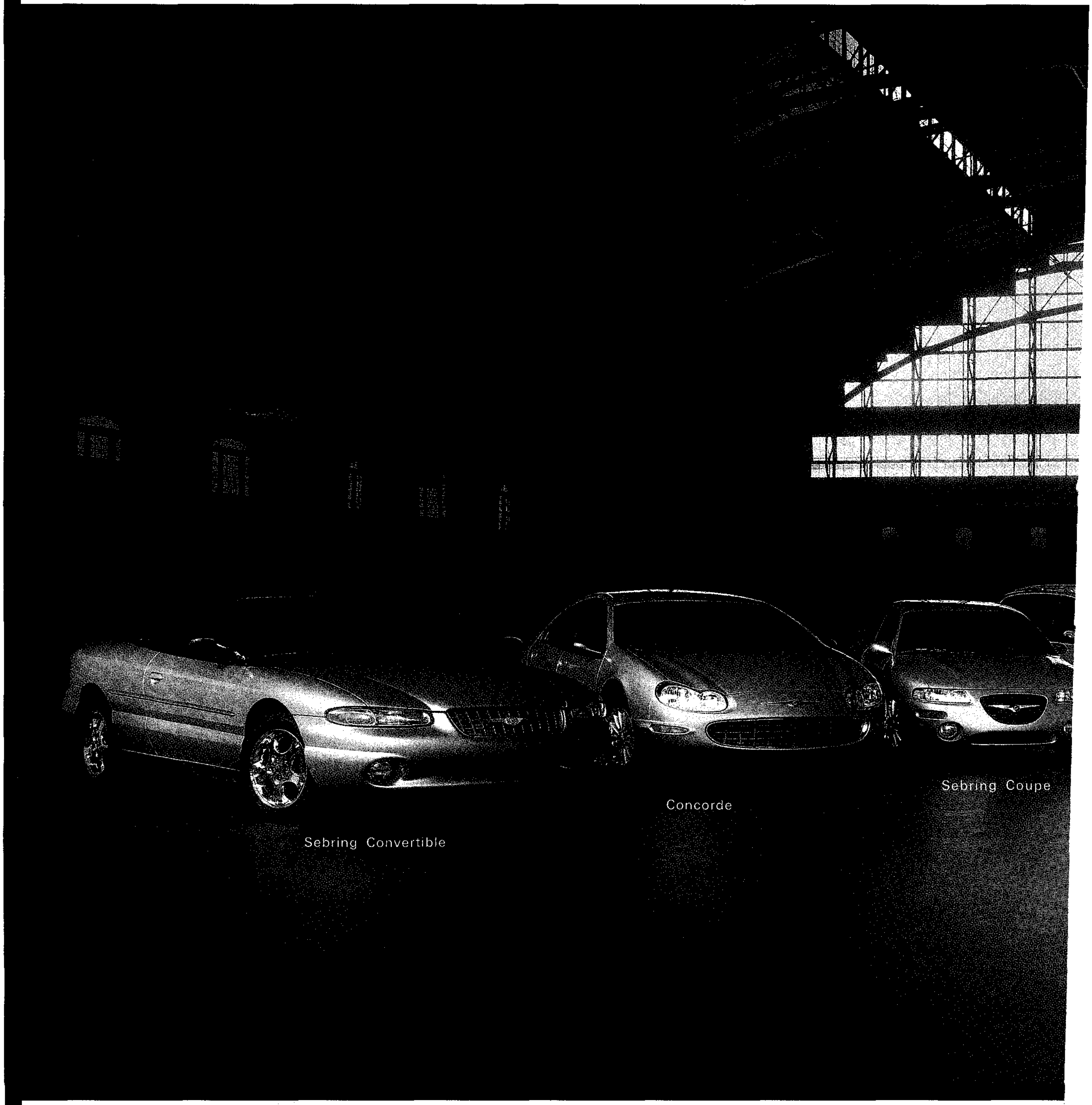
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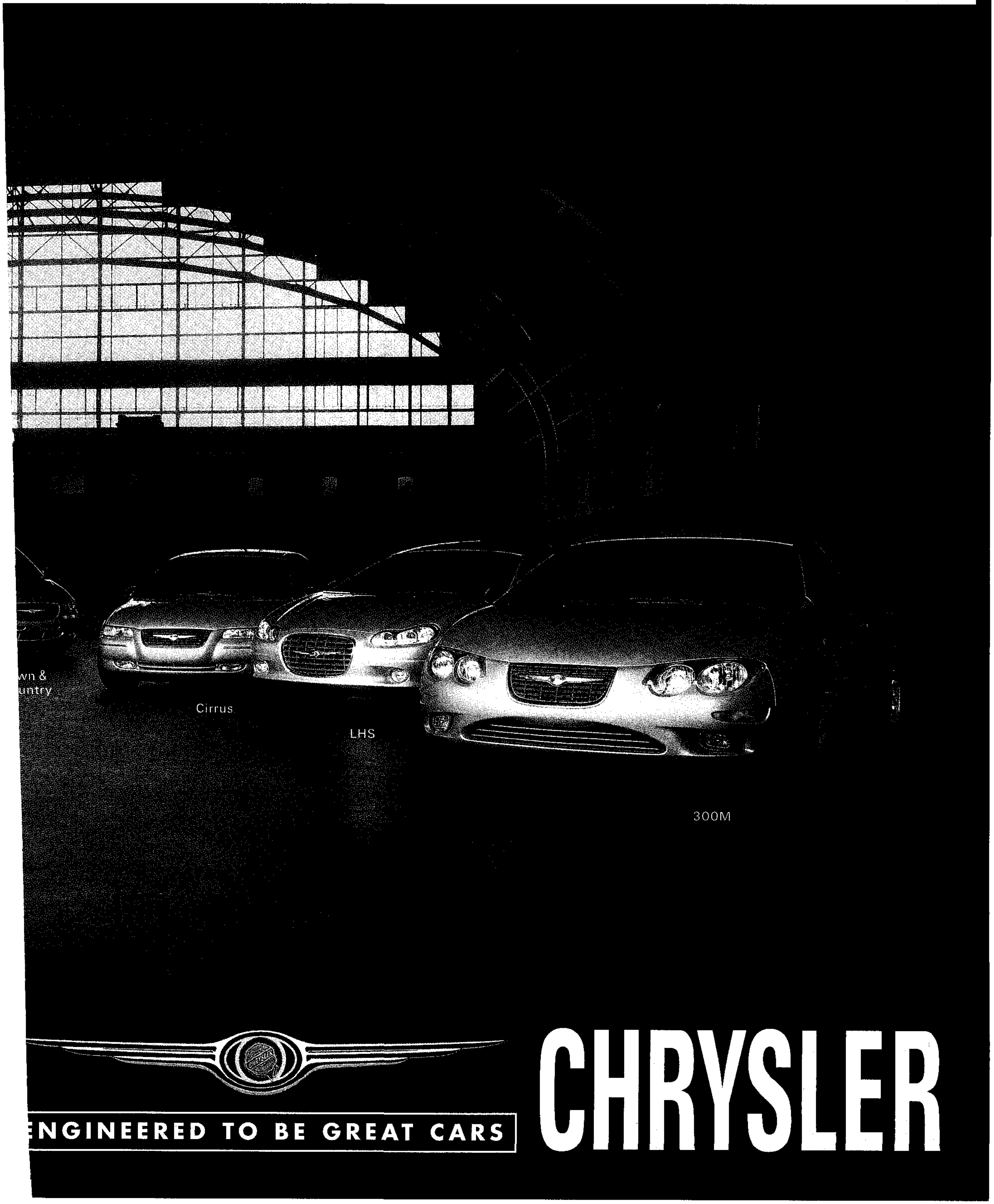
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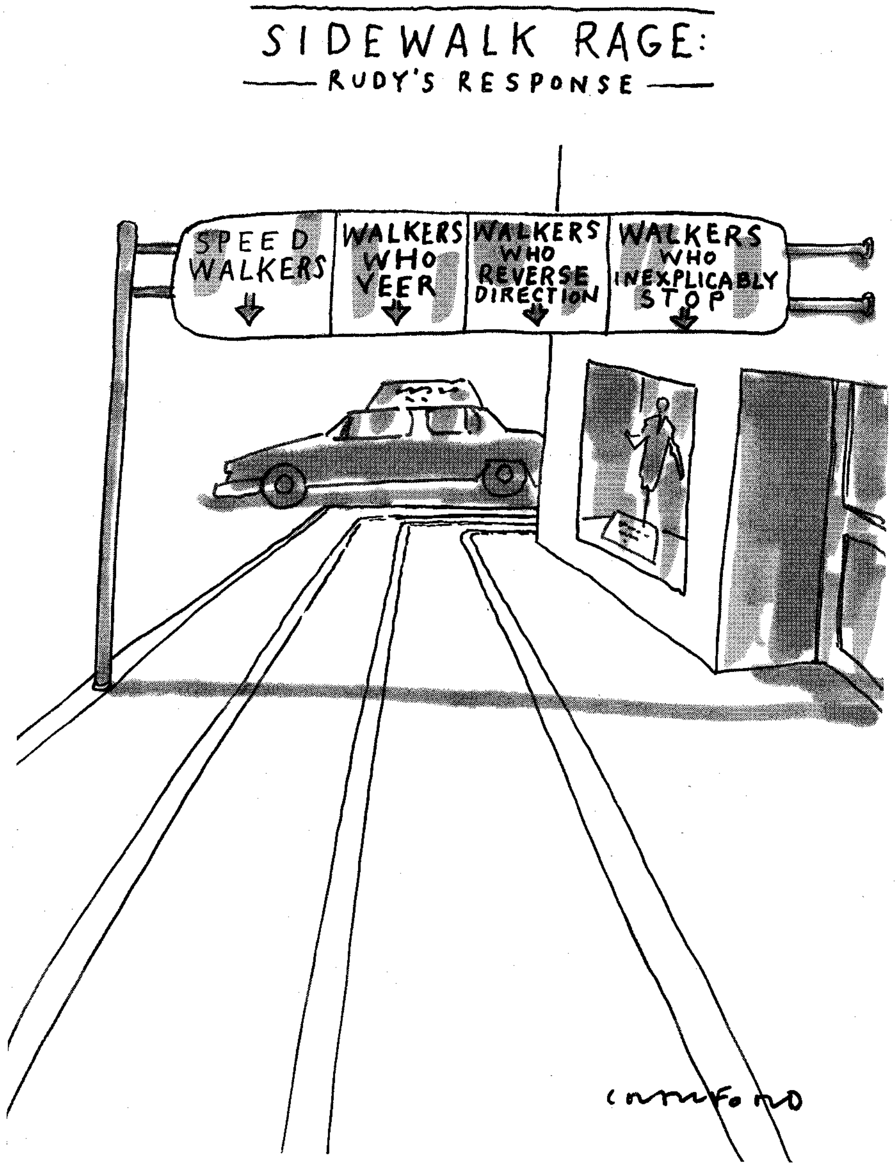

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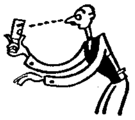
aspect of their strategy—their initial refusal to consider the use of ground forces—now appears prescient. Maintaining the solidarity of the nineteen NATO governments was indispensable—more important by far than the notionally greater pressure that the threat of ground troops might have put on Milosevic. Early talk of a ground war would have strained that solidarity to the breaking point, and might even have brought down Germany's coalition of Social Democrats and Greens. At the beginning, a ground war was unthinkable (and not for the Germans alone); by the end, failure was what had become unthinkable. If ground troops had been needed, it now seems clear, ground troops would have been used.

In terms of achieving its goals at an acceptable cost, the Kosovo war was at least as successful as the Gulf War. Yet its conclusion has engendered none of the euphoria that accompanied the liberation of Kuwait. It may seem strange that the authors of such a success should receive so little political credit for it. It may seem even stranger that the fact that NATO suffered not a single combat casualty should be an occasion for disapproval—as if this omission were somehow unsporting, or as if there were any evidence that military deaths on NATO's side would have meant fewer civilian deaths among the Albanians and the Serbs. Yet the absence of triumphalism is in many ways entirely appropriate. It is a sign of realism and of maturity. Police work is routine, and cops learn not to expect laurels for doing their jobs. Something has changed. With America's help, Europe has taken a long, quiet step toward normality. —HENDRIK HERTZBERG

DEPT. OF STRAIGHT THINKING

Is the Belgian Coca-Cola hysteria the real thing?



THE wave of illness among Belgian children last month had the look and feel—in the beginning, at least—of an utterly typical food-poisoning outbreak. First, forty-two children in the Belgian town of Bornem became mysteriously ill after drinking Coca-Cola and had to be hospitalized. Two days later, eight more schoolchildren fell sick in Bruges, followed by thirteen in Harelbeke the next day and forty-two in Lochristi three days after that—and on and on, in a widening spiral that, in the end, sent more than a hundred children to the hospital complaining of nausea, dizziness, and headaches, and forced Coca-Cola into the biggest product recall in its hundred-and-thirteen-year history. Upon investigation, an apparent culprit was found. In the Coca-Cola plant in Antwerp, contaminated carbon dioxide had been used to carbonate a batch of the soda's famous syrup. With analysts predicting that the scare would make a dent in Coca-Cola's quarterly earnings, the soft-drink giant apologized to the Belgian people, and the world received a sobering reminder of the fragility of food safety.

The case isn't as simple as it seems, though. A scientific study ordered by Coca-Cola found that the contaminants in the carbon dioxide were sulfur compounds left over from the CO_2 production process. In the tainted bottles of Coke, these residues were present at levels of between five and seventeen parts per billion. These sulfides can cause illness, however, only at levels about a thousand time greater than that. At seventeen parts pe billion, they simply leave a bad smell—lik rotten eggs—which means that Belgiu should have experienced nothing mor than a minor epidemic of nose-wrinkling More puzzling is the fact that, in four o the five schools where the bad Coke allegedly struck, half of the kids who go sick hadn't drunk any Coke that da Whatever went on in Belgium, in othe words, probably wasn't Coca-Cola poisoning. So what was it? Maybe nothing at al

“You know, when this Coke busine started I bet two of my friends a bottle champagne each that I knew the cause Simon Wessely, a psychiatrist wh teaches at the King's College School of Medicine in London, said. "It's quite simple. It's just mass hysteria. These things usually are."

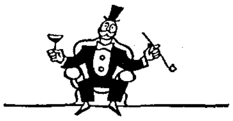
Wessely has been collecting reports of this kind of hysteria for about ten years and now has hundreds of examples, dating back as far as 1787, when millworkers in Lancashire suddenly took ill after they became persuaded that they were being poisoned by tainted cotton. According to Wessely, almost all cases fit a pattern. Someone sees a neighbor fall ill and becomes convinced that he is being contaminated by some unseen evil—in the past it was demons and spirits; nowadays it tends to be toxins and gases—and his fear makes him anxious. His anxiety makes him dizzy and nauseous. He begins to hyperventilate. He collapses. Other people hear the same allegation, see the "victim" faint, and begin to get anxious themselves. They feel nauseous. They hyperventilate. They collapse, and before you know it everyone in the room is hyperventilating and collapsing. These symptoms, Wessely stresses, are perfectly genuine. It's just that they are manifestations of a threat that is wholly imagined. "This kind of thing is extremely common," he says, "and it's almost normal. It doesn't mean that you are mentally ill or crazy."

Mass hysteria comes in several forms. Mass motor hysteria, for example, involves specific physical movements: shaking, tremors, and convulsions. According to the sociologist Robert Bartholomew, motor hysteria often occurs n environments of strict emotional repression; it was common in medieval nunneries and in nineteenth-century European schools, and it is seen today in ome Islamic cultures. What happened n Belgium, he says, is a fairly typical exmple of a more standard form of conagious anxiety, possibly heightened by he recent Belgian scare over dioxin-ontaminated animal feed. The students' larm over the rotten-egg odor of their Cokes, for example, is straight out of the ysteria textbooks. "The vast majority of hese events are triggered by some abormal but benign smell," Wessely said. Something strange, like a weird odor oming from the air-conditioning."

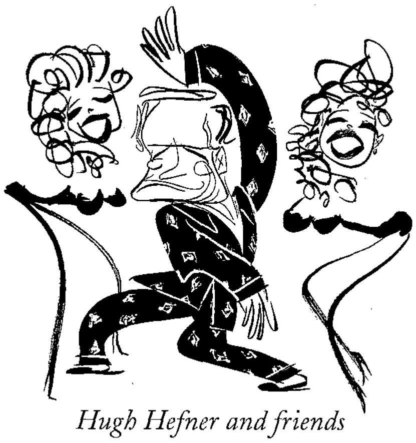
The fact that the outbreaks occurred schools is also typical of hysteria ses. "The classic ones always involve hoolchildren," Wessely continued. There is a famous British case involving ndreds of schoolgirls who collapsed during a 1980 Nottinghamshire jazz festival. They blamed it on a local farmer spraying pesticides." Bartholomew has just published a paper on a hundred and fifteen documented hysteria cases in schools over the past three hundred years. As anyone who has ever been to a rock concert knows, large numbers of adolescents in confined spaces seem to be particularly susceptible to mass hysteria. Those intent on pointing the finger at Coca-Cola in this sorry business ought to remember that. "We let the people of Belgium down," Douglas Ivester, the company's chairman, said in the midst of the crisis. Or perhaps it was the other way around. —MALCOLM GLADWELL

WALL STREET FOLLIES

Shareholders' complaint: You can't take the playboy out of the mansion.



ALL of a sudden, Hugh Hefner is in the news again. So is his publicly traded company, Playboy Enterprises, whose stock price has climbed nearly sixty per cent in a year. At seventy-three, Hef, as he likes to be called, is convinced that Playboy's recent success is due to him, personally. "These things work in curious and mysterious ways," he said, speaking by phone from the Playboy Mansion, in Los Angeles. "In part, it is because my wife and I separated, and I've come out to play again. And it has to do with timing. Prince, in a famous song some years ago, said, 'Party like it's 1999,' and it is, and we are."



Hugh Hefner and friends

Despite the rising stock price and various new media ventures launched by Christie Hefner, the company's forty-six-year-old C.E.O. and the boss's daughter, many shareholders remain discouraged by Playboy's financial performance. Last year, on sales of $318 million, Playboy Enterprises had profits of only $4.3 million, less than a third of what it earned in 1980. So what's the problem? Wall Street is generally happy with Christie, who is seen as having turned around her father's company with such initiatives as Playboy Online, Playboy TV, and the Playboy Catalog. (Pamela Anderson pool cues can be had for twenty-eight dollars, and Martini glasses stamped with Hef's initials are eighteen dollars a pair.) In the eyes of some shareholders, the real trouble with Playboy Enterprises may be the top playboy himself. While Christie Hefner is trying to build Playboy into a serious media company, her dad, in silk pajamas, lounges with his current young companions, Brande and the twins, Mandy and Sandy. Media analysts feel that *Playboy* magazine, which Hef oversees, is as dated as he is, a piece of history, like kidney-shaped swimming pools and hi-fi consoles. With 3.15 million aging readers, *Playboy* has a circulation less than half what it was in the nineteen-seventies.

Although the magazine is only a part of Playboy Enterprises, it is the brand on which the rest of the company is built. On the subject of *Playboy*, Raymond Perrier, who evaluates brands for Interbrand Group, remarks, "Its values are not relevant. They're embarrassing. They remind you of finding dirty videos in your father's closet."

Hef, whose income from Playboy Enterprises in 1998 was $868,916, may be a liability in other ways. The Tudor-style Playboy Mansion, with its flamingos and peacocks, a swanky grotto, ponds stocked with six hundred Japanese koi, and a staff of seventy (including an archivist who has so far assembled fourteen hundred leather-bound scrapbooks documenting Hef's life), is a company expense. Playboy Enterprises spent an astonishing $4.3 million last year to operate the mansion. That sum is identical to the total profits earned by Playboy Enterprises in 1998.

Shareholders are impatient. "Where else would the editor of a magazine earn more than the company C.E.O.?" one shareholder at Playboy's annual meeting last May complained. Another shareholder reminded everyone that Hef has not attended a shareholders' meeting since 1987. Someone suggested that the Playboy Mansion should be making money: "Run tourists up there and let Hef shake their hands." In Hef's absence, Christie responded, "Playboy was founded on his life style, and that's what we are leveraging into new media outlets."

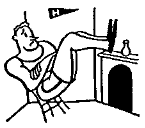
Shareholders of Playboy Enterprises have never had much influence. Hef controls seventy per cent of the voting shares; he elects the board of directors, and he can veto all decisions. "It's a fiefdom; Christie does what he wants," said a hedge-fund manager who owns about forty thousand Playboy shares.

What Hef wants is not what shareholders want, which is for him to sell his shares. Their thinking is this: If the company were sold to someone aggressive—Rupert Murdoch, say—Playboy could be a giant, worth perhaps four times its current value. But Hef does not intend to sell his shares. "I never started the company because I wanted to be hugely successful as a company," he explained. "For me this has always been from the heart. It has very little to do with money."

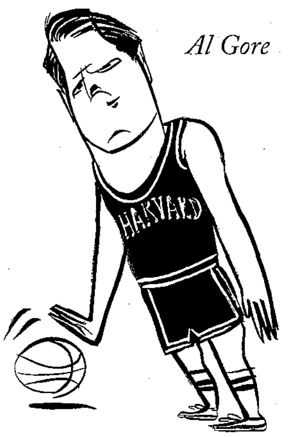
And so Playboy's shareholders are waiting for Hef to die, assuming that his shares will then be sold to outsiders. To ward off a takeover, he has amended his will: instead of dividing his shares into four blocks, one for each of his children, he will leave everything to his two youngest children, Marston, age nine, and Cooper, age seven. "My estate, in perpetuity after my death, will support Christie and her management," Hef explained. "Then, eventually, it will come into the hands of my boys." There was no mention of whether any provisions had been made for Brande, Mandy, and Sandy. —NINA MUNK

DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS

Al Gore's basketball diaries.



NOW that Al Gore has announced that he is running for the Democratic Presidential nomination, stories about the Vice-President are finally beginning to overshadow tales of the basketball exploits of his challenger Bill Bradley. But few have bothered to investigate Gore's own career on the hardwood. Not very many voters know that Gore played reserve guard for the Harvard freshman basketball squad during the 1965-66 academic year. His accomplishments are hardly comparable to Bill Bradley's star turn as an All-American (according to Harvard Athletic Department records, the Vice-President averaged only 2.8 points in the twelve games he played in), but Gore's former teammates report that he was a good team player, who had strong practice habits and got the most out of his natural ability. They agree that Al Gore's got—or, at least, had—some game.



Al Gore

Many of the Vice-President's teammates, when they were reached by telephone recently, had trouble remembering highlights of Gore's performance on the court, since he usually played only toward the end of lopsided wins (typical was a six-point effort in a 111–30 squeaker over Brandeis). But they do recall his distinctive playing style, in part because they've continued to see traces of it in his public, off-the-court persona. Gore's former teammates describe his shooting technique as being better than it looked. "Al had an extremely unorthodox way of shooting, almost catapulting the ball from behind his head," the team's starting point guard, Jan Halverson, said. Halverson, who is now an attorney in Minneapolis, added, "But the damned thing periodically went in."

"It was sort of half jump shot, half set shot. The leap came while he was shooting," Bob Kanuth, a retired banker in Palm Beach, said. "Al kind of threw it at the basket. It was more shot put than shot.

"You know how some players have a wonderful ability to see the whole court while they dribble?" Kanuth went on. "Al didn't. He had his eyes two feet in front of him, focussing on making sure the ball came up and down. As he charged down the court, I thought to myself, If anyone gets in that guy's way, watch out!"

Describing this technique, Chris Gallagher, a New York investment banker who was the team's captain, attempted to dribble around a particular boilerplate Al Gore adjective: "I don't want to use that word. I'm not going to use that word. Let's just say he wasn't very loose."

Gallagher, a former All-City high-school star from the Bronx, said that Gore had asked him for help in adding some "New York shake and bake" improvisation to his one-on-one offensive repertoire. On several occasions, Gore and Gallagher stayed after practice to work on the stutter step, the double-pump fake, and the hesitation dribble. Gore was often the last player to leave the old fourth-floor gym at Harvard's Indoor Athletic Building.

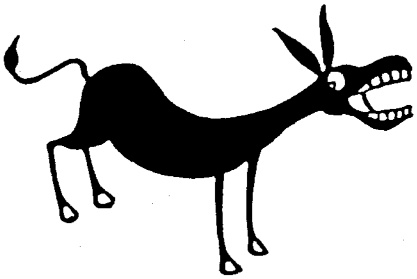
"Al's attitude was 'I'll beat you with sweat,'" Kanuth, who still sees Gore occasionally, said. "No one worked harder."

Gore's defensive style was equally determined. "He hounded you to death. And, if he didn't stop you, he'd at least irritate you," Kanuth said. Harvard records show that during Gore's season on the team he had almost twice as many personal fouls (twenty-six) as baskets (fifteen).

Eric Gustavson, a former starting guard who is now an English teacher and basketball coach at the Peddie School, in New Jersey, said that he expects to back Gore for President. Yet he—like most of his teammates—admits that choosing between a college-basketball pal and a high-school-basketball idol for the Democratic nomination is not an easy layup.

"We all looked up to Bill Bradley in high school," Paul Waickowski, now a Massachusetts State Court judge, who played forward and center, said. "He did it all—academically and athletically." Bradley's extraordinary Princeton years were chronicled in this magazine in a 1965 Profile by John McPhee, which became the book "A Sense of Where Yo Are." Gore was an inspiration for anothe celebrated book about an Ivy Leagu jock, "Love Story," but, unfortunately, no for the jock part. As Erich Segal ha made clear, he modelled Oliver Barret IV's relationship with his father on Gor and his dad, Senator Albert Gore, Sr., bu Barrett's athletic prowess was drawn fro Gore's roommate, Tommy Lee Jones.

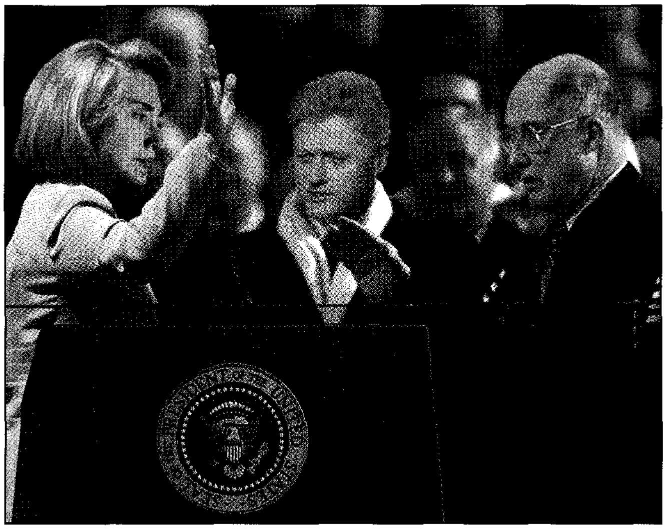
Several of the Harvard team's bes players might not have even considere playing basketball at an Ivy Leagu school if it had not been for Bradley high-profile success. So, long before h got in the way of Gore's clear path to th Democratic nomination, Bradley was r sponsible for pushing his future rival fa ther down the freshman-team benc Now, after six years as the ultima backup player, Gore is finally getting h chance at, as Bradley puts it, "one-on-o for eleven months." —JOHN SOLOM



THE CAMPAIGN

Is Hillary aiming for higher office?

POLITICS is often compared to horse-racing, but a more apt comparison might be to insurance underwriting. When it comes to playing the odds, elected officials tend to be quite conservative. While voters and, to an even greater extent, reporters may harbor romantic notions about long-shot candidacies and do-or-die campaigns, politicians themselves take a decidedly dim view of such improvident behavior. Risk is inevitable; the whole point is to minimize it. So ingrained is this ethos that when one member of the profession violates it others are offended, and in extreme cases, it appears, even refuse to believe it. Consider the latest round of rumors about Hillary Clinton.



Flash-forward to the second Clinton Presidency.

This week, Mrs. Clinton is scheduled to pay her first visit to New York in her official capacity as Woman on the Verge. The trip, financed by her new exploratory committee, will take her to Oneonta, Utica, Syracuse, and the tiny town of Pindars Corners, where she will visit Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's farm. But, even as she hesitates to declare herself openly as a Senate candidate, she is being credited with a much grander ambition: becoming the first woman President.

This speculation has been advanced by a few pundits, including Tim Russert, of NBC, and in New York political circles it is so widespread that it has become a commonplace. During the past few weeks, it was offered to me several times unsolicited, and when I began making calls about it I could not find an official of either party or a member of the larger caste of political kibbitzers who hadn't already entertained it. "I heard this a long time ago, that she was running for senator to become President," Mitchell Moss, a professor of urban planning at New York University, told me. Though Republicans were much more willing than Democrats to promote the theory on the record, the inclination to believe appeared to be bipartisan. As one Democratic operative said, "I just think it's logic."

As the rumor has circulated, it has acquired a fair bit of specificity, including separate provisions for different possible outcomes of the next Presidential election. One scenario has it that, after Al Gore loses, the Democratic challenger in 2004 will pick Senator Clinton to be his running mate. A second scenario has Gore winning and Senator Clinton mounting her own Presidential campaign in 2008. The possible effects of such speculations on a candidacy already burdened with carpetbaggery have made some Democratic leaders nervous. "If I were the state Party chair, I would go off the wall," one told me. Another said he had advised Mrs. Clinton to face the problem head on, with a promise, if elected, to serve out her full Senate term.

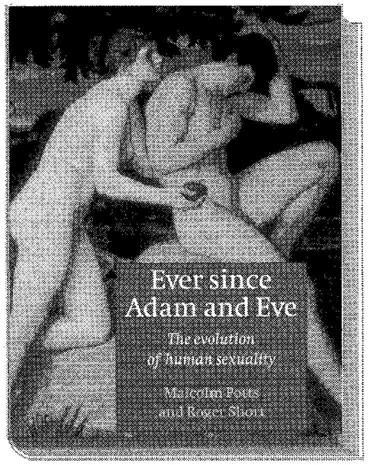
The new rumor clearly derives its force from the old rumor, which, improbably enough, has turned out to be true. Since December, when the idea of a Clinton Senate race was first floated, to much giddy enthusiasm, the missing element has consistently been a reason for her to run. Anyone who looked objectively at the hazards of the race (shame, guilt, and rejection) and measured them against its potential benefits (becoming a junior senator in the minority party) just couldn't make the calculation work out. And this was especially true when the decision was framed in the most idealistic terms: a former First Lady surely is well positioned to do a great deal of good all on her own.

Many of those whom Mrs. Clinton turned to for advice now claim that they either discouraged her from running or at least offered cautionary words. Former Governor Mario Cuomo told me he had warned her that "she could conceivably have more influence outside the Senate." Others, speaking not for attribution, said they were even more blunt with the First Lady. "I think you're nuts to do it" is how one prominent Democrat told me he had put it.

None of the people I spoke to could trace the rumor of Hillary Clinton's White House dreams back, even indirectly, to the First Lady herself. In fact, people who have spoken to her many times said that it had never come up. But these same people said that they would not expect such a plan to feature in conversation.

As it happens, if one goes back far enough—before Monica and the vast right-wing conspiracy, before national health care tanked and the Democrats lost both houses of Congress—people close to the First Couple were speaking quite openly of Hillary for President. Back in December, 1993, Betsey Wright, a long-time friend of the Clintons who served as Bill's chief of staff in Arkansas, told Connie Bruck, a reporter for this magazine, of a plan for a continuous Clinton dynasty. "There are a great many people talking very seriously of her succeeding him," Wright said.

Later, Bruck asked the President about the plan. "Oh, she'd be great at it," he said. "But I don't think she'd *ever* run—not in a hundred years!" Asked why, he responded, "Because she just always told me that the one thing she was not interested in was being in elected office—and she's always said that publicly." —ELIZABETH KOLBERT



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ANNALS OF DESIGN

DETROIT TIGER

What will J. Mays do to the American car?

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

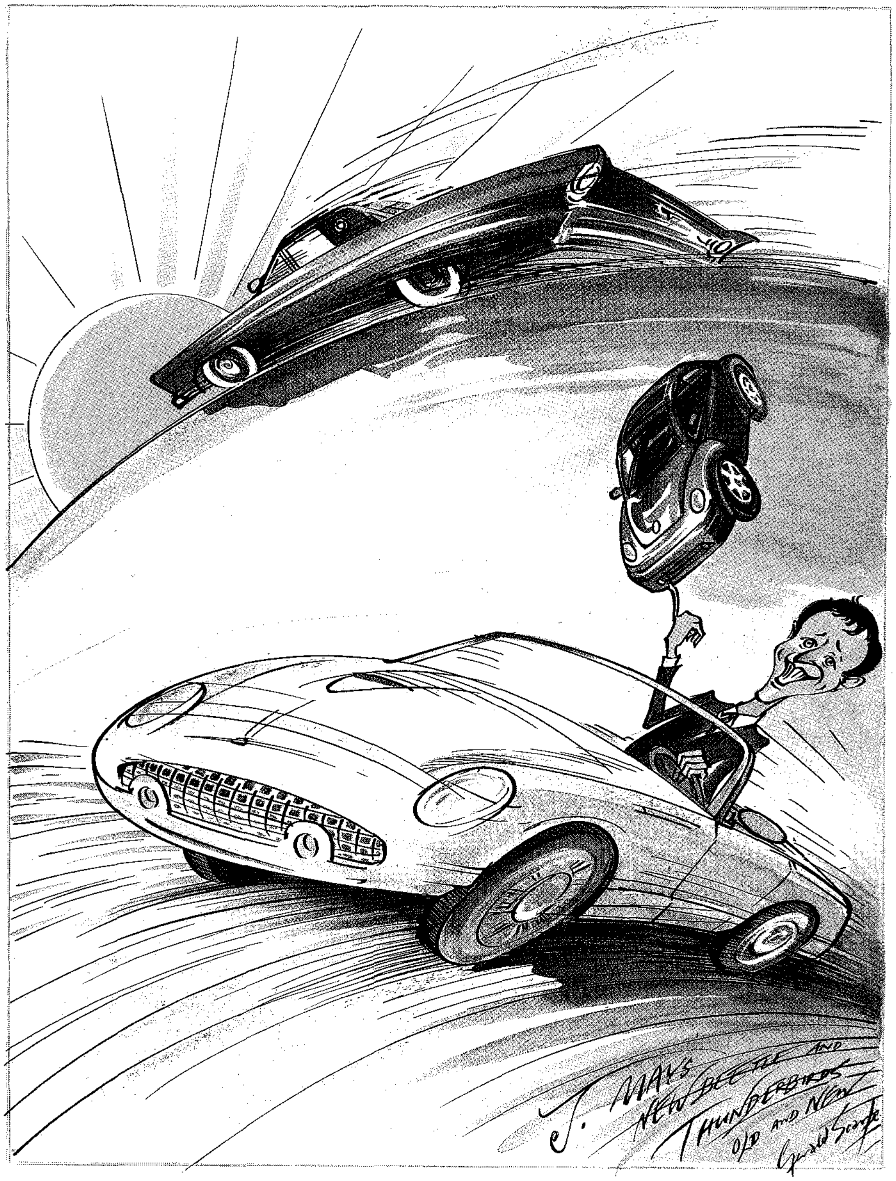
WHEN designers give museum lectures, they usually show up with a tray of slides. J. Mays brings a sleek, eighty-foot-long white trailer truck. Mays is the head of design for the Ford Motor Company, and the truck carries three or four new cars that are elements in an elaborately choreographed presentation of his work. A few weeks ago, the white truck left the Ford headquarters in Dearborn, Michigan, four days before Mays was to speak at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. An advance team made up of a special-events manager, an assistant, and a public-relations officer flew to California three days later. Mays arrived the morning of the lecture and left on the red-eye so he could get back home to Michigan in time for his five-year-old son's graduation from first grade. He was onstage in San Francisco for just under an hour, and spent forty-five minutes more mingling in the lobby of the museum, where there was a display of the cars that had been trucked in: a yellow version of the upcoming new Ford Thunderbird and a silver-toned experimental car, something called (my)mercury, with a rounded shape and lots of amber glass.

Automobile companies frequently make elaborate presentations to buyers and journalists at trade shows, but the event at the museum in San Francisco, part of a series on design trends co-sponsored by the American Institute of Graphic Arts, was a lecture for architects and designers and students. A few days later, Mays gave a similar talk at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, in Bloomfield Hills, outside of Detroit, during an international-design symposium at which Frank Gehry delivered the opening lecture. Neither of these events would seem to be cost-effective in terms of corporate promotion, but both of them served the purpose of reinforcing Mays's reputation as someone other designers take seriously. Until recently, American car designers existed somewhat apart from the rest of the design world. They were said to have "gasoline in their veins." Mays, who went to work at Ford less than two years ago, is the closest thing to an international design star that his profession has produced. He is forty-four years old, the youngest head designer in Ford's history, and the first one in decades not to have spent his career working for the company. Given the fact that Ford has just bought Volvo, and owns Jaguar, Mazda, and Aston Martin, as well as the Ford, Mercury, and Lincoln nameplates—and that Mays is responsible for the look of every car the company produces—he may well be the most influential car designer on the planet.

Mays is a pleasant-looking man with a round face and short, sandy-colored hair. He is from Oklahoma, and he has an amiably bland Middle American expression, but he spent thirteen years in Europe working for Volkswagen-Audi, and he wears well-cut jackets that distinguish him from the average automobile-industry executive in Detroit. Mays is a poised speaker. He drew a good crowd to the seven-hundred-seat auditorium in San Francisco, and he entertained them with remarks on design that were weighted toward his admiration for Bauhaus ideas. In Mays's narrative, such ideas flow naturally into current American theories about marketing. "I believe people purchase products for emotional reasons, not rational ones," he said. "The moment they reach into their pocket and pull out their wallet—it's an emotional decision, it's about the ability of the product to meet their aspirations." With cars, it is the product itself that establishes the emotiona connection, Mays said, not advertising An example of such a car is Mays’ most famous design, the prototype for the new Volkswagen Beetle, which was launched a few months after he was hired by Ford. The Beetle was a fresh take on a classic design, and evoked a great outpouring of emotion from consumers. (In this country, at any rate—the Germans didn't respond as enthusiastically.)

To demonstrate how an emotional relationship with a product might be encouraged, Mays asked the audience to think about what their most intimate link to the design of their cars is. "Reach into your pocket and look at your keys," he said. "You will probably find a nasty piece of black plastic with a piece of metal sticking out of it. But this is an opportunity to make an umbilical connection to the consumer." Then he showed slides of keys that elicit the associations people are supposed to have with various cars—a key for a sport-utility vehicle that looks something like a Swiss Army knife, a key for a truck that resembles a padlock, and a sensuous, leather-bound key for a Jaguar. For a trifling amount of money, Mays said, carmakers could create tiny pieces of foldout sculpture that would serve as reminders of brand identity—reinforcing the designs of the cars themselves. It was a gimmick, but a persuasive one, and it fit into the strategy of marketing cars as distinct personalities.

MAYS has a larger role in the marketing of cars than did his predecessor at Ford—a respected designer named Jack Telnack, who created the original Taurus—and he has more to say about such things than did even the most famous and powerful automobile designers of the past: Harley Earl, for example, who designed the extravagant, chrome-bedecked General Motors cars of the nineteen-fifties; Raymond Loewy, who produced several classic Studebakers during the same period; Virgil Exner, the Chrysler designer behind the tail-fin craze; or Bruno Sacco, the longtime head of design at Mercedes-Benz. Mays differs from these designers also in that he is not associated with a particular design style or shape. He leans toward simplicity and clarity of design and dislikes fussy lines and excess detail, but he does not have a style signature. The whimsical, cartoonlike new Beetle, which Mays describes as "essentially three circles," is distinctive because it has both wit and finesse, but mostly because it refers so overtly to its predecessor. Mays is the preëminent representative of the current trend toward nostalgic automobile design, which breaks with the practice of the previous generation of car designers, who prided themselves on looking forward, not backward. During the past few decades, while every other field, from fashion to art to architecture to music, was mining its history, car designers were isolated from the rest of the culture. They knew cars, and they understood that car design had gone through phases—fins, boxiness, aerodynamics—but they hadn't picked up on the postmodern approach that designers in other fields were using.



Mays is best known for updated versions of classic designs like the Thunderbird.

The Mazda Miata, which appeared in 1989, loosely recalled the classic roadsters of the nineteen-forties and fifties, but the new Beetle was the world's first postmodern car—or at least the first to have mass-market appeal—and it expressed an aesthetic that fit in with projects that were simmering at Ford when Mays arrived at the company. He took over the design of a new version of the classic 1957 Thunderbird two-seater, tinkering with several aspects of it to make the car at least partially his own. "What we had before J. came was much more timid, more like the car from the fifties," says Helmuth Schrader, who heads the car-design division under Mays. "The signature headlamps and tail lamps are key to the essence of the Thunderbird, and J. made them bolder." The Mays-influenced Thunderbird is rounder than the classic version, and more voluptuous, although the over-all body shape is similar, and the famous porthole rear windows have been retained. The car made its début at the Detroit auto show last January and was a tremendous hit. It is expected to go into production next year and is being promoted as the emotional flagship of Ford's entire line. As with the Beetle, the design is new—not a single detail comes directly out of the past—but no one can mistake the shape for anything other than an allusion to a treasured icon.

J MAYS—the "J" doesn't stand for anything, he says, except a shortened version of his grandfather's name, S.J., which didn't stand for anything, either—grew up on a ranch in Maysville, Oklahoma. One of his strongest childhood memories is of going with his grandfather to Oklahoma City in the mid-sixties to pick up a new Oldsmobile Toronado. "It had pop-up headlamps, huge wheels, no vent windows, and no transmission tunnel because it was front-wheel drive. It was a stunning car," he says. Mays now owns a black 1972 Porsche 911, which he keeps at his summer home in California; in Detroit he drives a black Jaguar XJR, and his wife has a black Lincoln Navigator. His long list of favorite cars includes the 1949 Ford and the 1949 Cadillac, the 1955 Chevrolet Nomad, the 1956 and 1961 Lincoln Continental, the BMW 2002, the Volkswagen Golf, the Nissan 300 ZX, the Ferrari Daytona Coupe, the Porsche 356, the Mercedes 230SL, and the Jaguar C-type. They are all beautiful cars, neither trendy nor generic, with clean lines. Mays's list is notable for the absence of heavy, glitzy American cars from the fifties and sixties, which he says are "like the culture back then, full of saturated fats."

Mays is an articulate, cosmopolitan man who talks easily, with a hint of an Oklahoma twang, sliding back and forth between enthusiastic shoptalk about design and a kind of corporate-speak. In the first five minutes of our first meeting, a few weeks ago, he referred to the Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe, the Alessi teakettle by Michael Graves, the CityWalk entertainment zone at Universal City Studios, the Wiener Werkstätte in Vienna, and the Target discount stores. He is eager to make it clear that he is not one of those car designers who think only about cars. He looks at everything, and talks about wanting to position Ford as a company that brings sophisticated design to the mass market, as I.B.M. and CBS did a generation ago. Mays expresses these goals in the current jargon of marketing departments. Ford has been very successful, he says, in "evolving its brands" as it tries "to become the world's leading consumer company in the automotive area." He tends to blur the differences between the language of design and the language of marketing, which is no doubt one of the reasons the business people at Ford find him so reassuring and useful.

Mays's office is on the eleventh floor of Ford's main building in Dearborn, a Skidmore, Owings & Merrill glass box from the nineteen-fifties that functionaries refer to in hushed tones as "world headquarters." Mays has made his suite something of a shrine to design, with a Bang & Olufsen compact-disk player, eight Herman Miller Aeron chairs, and a desk—a walnut box that appears to float on a chrome base—that was part of the original office furniture; most other Ford executives jettisoned their fifties furniture during a recent renovation. There are few signs of the car business, just a handful of toy models of classic Fords and some old photographs of racing cars. The bookshelf holds more design journals than car magazines. There is no sign that he uses the office to make sketches. Mays supervises nine hundred designers around the world and doesn't do the kind of hands-on work that he did earlier in his career. Like many creative people who have become managers, he establishes the company's creative direction, and his staff executes his wishes.

When Mays is in Michigan, he goes about once a week to the design studios in Ford's Product Development Center, a sprawling complex of low brick buildings which looks like a factory inside, with corridors wide enough to drive a car through, and two-story workspaces big enough to contain the full-size clay prototypes of cars that are produced by "modellers," the technicians who work from the sketches and computer-generated images produced by designers. There are a few real cars sitting around as well. On the day that I visited, one of the studios was filled with clay prototypes of new versions of the Mercury Mountaineer, the Ford Explorer, and the Lincoln Navigator, and also a white Range Rover Discovery that was obviously not there by accident. I was not permitted in the advanced-design studio, which is a kind of think tank where experimental work is going on that Ford doesn't want its competitors to know about.

Mays wanders through the studios as often as he can, talking to the designers, but his work is more often done during formal reviews, when projects in various stages of development are presented for his approval. Some of these meetings take place in a room adjacent to the sleek studio that Mays fixed up as a mini-showroom, with a turntable on which a car can be parked, dark walls, soft lighting, and tables with more black Aeron chairs. Usually, however, the designers cluster around Mays in the middle of the studio. He reviews important projects about once a week, in meetings that last no more than an hour and are more often twenty or thirty minutes long. He tends to be quick and decisive, focussing on details: Is this the right tail-light for the Navigator? Can't you come up with a door handle that is better for the Mercury? "He might well say that this detail would be fine on a Ford but it isn't right for a Thunderbird," Helmuth Schrader says. "J. is never searching for the latest design trick that you can apply to both a truck and a sports car. He is always trying to connect to the brand, to the product at hand." He quizzes designers about the reasoning behind each detail and the extent to which it supports the overall image of the car. "He wants to hear from the designers, as long as they're not giving him 'I just like it' as a reason," Schrader says.

Mays admires cars with simple, unfussy designs, like the 1948 Porsche 356 (far left). At Ford, he has worked on the Lincoln Blackwood luxury truck and an update of the 1957 Thunderbird, which will go into production soon. The (my)mercury (right) is a concept car built to suggest a new image for Mercury.

MAYS was a lacklustre journalism student at the University of Oklahoma in the early seventies, when he learned that there was a place where he could get a degree by drawing cars, and he transferred to the Art Center College of Design, in Pasadena, which has one of the two major automotive-design programs in the country. (The other is the Center for Creative Studies, in Detroit.) He was "into all the disciplines," says Marta Solas-Porras Hinson, a designer who has been one of Mays's closest friends since they met as students in Pasadena. "A lot of the other transportation-design students stayed to themselves and their car talk, but J. got outside the circle. He still had this obsession with cars—I remember the shag carpeting in his apartment was filled with modelling clay—but his interest was in the whole world."

Mays in those years was brash and self-confident, and he had no idea how little he knew. "J. used to say to me that it's not going to be all that hard because all there is on the road is bars of soap," Hinson says. But he was good enough to get offered a job as a designer at Audi, and in Germany he came under the tutelage of Martin Smith, a British designer who had overseen the development of the Audi Quattro. "He used to say to me, 'You know, Maysie, you don't want to wear that tie, you look too American,'" Mays recalls. Before long, the unsophisticated young designer had acquired a layer of European polish, which married well with his ever so slightly slick American instincts. Most important, he was exposed to a culture that has an inherent respect for product design. "If you walk into any hardware store in Germany, you will find ten different light switches at every possible price, and all of them are good," he says. "They are so much about detail. And here we have one light switch for seventy-nine cents, and it's no good. My design education happened in Germany, not at art school—I always thank my lucky stars that I didn't go to Detroit after graduation."

Volkswagen-Audi sent Mays back to the United States in 1990, to help start a new design studio in Simi Valley, outside Los Angeles. The company was following the lead of Toyota and Nissan, which had set up satellite design studios in Southern California in the hope of opening themselves up to some younger, hipper design influences. Mays was happy to go to California, but skeptical of the effort. "They said go to California to see the trends, and I thought, Why would anyone want California trends in a German car?" Mays says. Affluent American baby boomers bought BMWs and Audis and Mercedes-Benzes because they were German, not American. What emerged from the Volkswagen-Audi Southern California studio was the new Beetle, which is essentially an American car, playful and a little goofy. "No German company could conceive of that car, and Volkswagen fought our team tooth and nail," he recalls, before it changed its mind and decided to produce it.

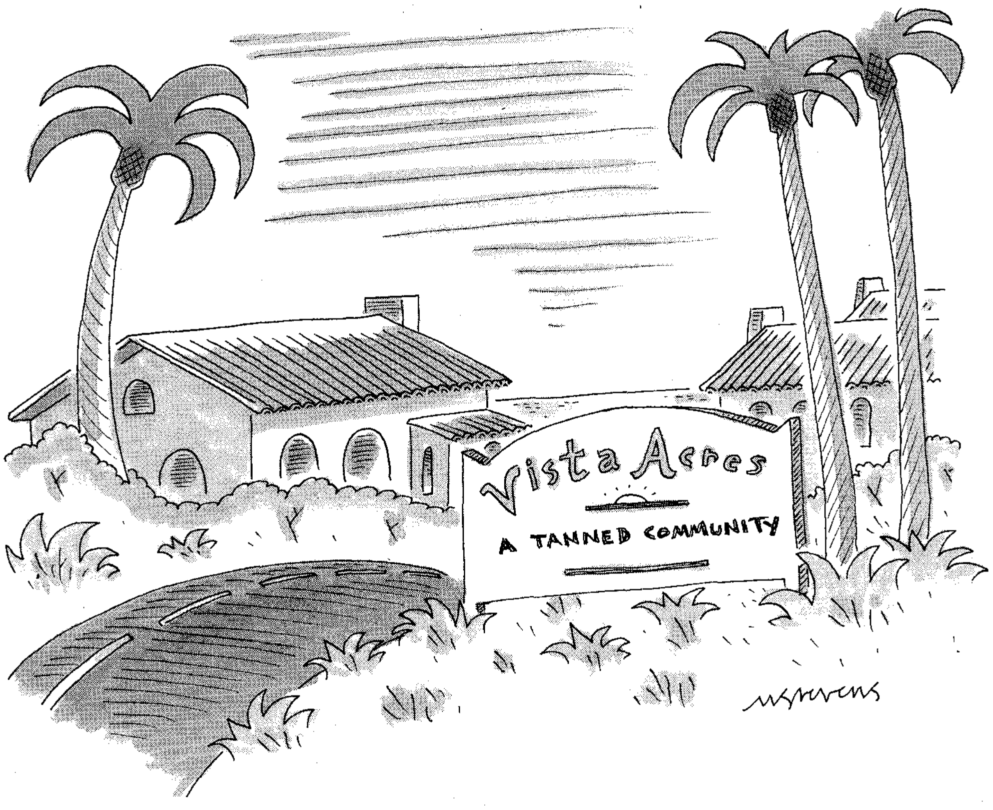
Mays is either a mess of contradictions or a man who has achieved a conflict-free synthesis between the world of art and the world of commerce. He talks about how much German automotive design, with its emphasis on spare, cool elegance, has influenced him, and at Audi, where he rose to the position of head designer, he played an important role in establishing the company as perhaps the most widely admired major carmaker from the standpoint of design, with such cars as the A6 and the new Audi TT coupe, and the gently arched profile that is a theme running through all the Audi models. Automobile design doesn't get much better than that. And yet when he left Audi, in 1995, he joined an American consulting firm, SHR, where his partner was not another designer but a marketing expert named Carolyn Lantz, and he brought her along with him to Ford.

The new Beetle unifies the conflicting strands of Mays's sensibility. It is an almost abstract design, and the allusions to the old Beetle, while powerful, are never literal. In this sense, it is similar to the first postmodern buildings by architects like Robert Venturi, which were intended not to replicate history literally but only to allude to it. One of Mays's greatest irritations is the way in which the Beetle was hailed as a "retro" piece of design. "Retro is just old-fashioned form, old-fashioned filigree," he says. His tone is defensive, as if there were nothing he feared more than being thought to be primarily a copyist, and he repeats his point that while both the new Beetle and the new Thunderbird evoke the spirit of the past, they are new cars. His discomfort at the word "retro" is reminiscent of how the term "postmodern" quickly took on the same awkward associations for architects, including many of those who started the trend, and who were appalled at where others took it.

MAYS spends about a week every month in Europe. "I leave Detroit on Sunday night and get to Heathrow on Monday. I'll spend all day in the design studio in Dunton, then maybe have dinner in London with Stephen Bayley"—a British design critic who works as a consultant to Ford—"or some supplier, then head out to Jaguar in Coventry the next day. The second night I'll fly to Cologne"—which is where Ford's Mondeo, Puma, and Ka models are produced—"and then on to Ghia design studios in Turin. Then Friday maybe I'll go back to Dunton to see if they've corrected what I asked them for on Monday, and fly home Saturday. Except now I have to figure out how to fit in Volvo, too."

Mays has worked most of his professional life in Europe and California. The fact that he knows cars but was not a part of the entrenched corporate culture of Detroit was one of the things that made him attractive to Jac Nasser, the C.E.O. of Ford, who has also hired Wolfgang Reitzle, from BMW, to oversee Ford's luxury brands. A decade ago, it would have been unusual for Ford to hire top executives from Chrysler or General Motors, let alone from foreign rivals; Ford's management ranks were composed mainly of "lifers," as were those at G.M. and Chrysler. Now that Chrysler has merged with Daimler-Benz, Nissan has been all but taken over by Renault, Toyota and Honda produce many of their cars in the United States, and Ford owns several of the most prestigious international nameplates, the distinction between the three big American car companies and the rest of the industry has evaporated. Detroit is no longer a thing unto itself.

The auto industry has changed in more than corporate structure. Technology has advanced to the point where most cars are reasonably well made, reliable, safe, and easy to maintain, which means that design and image are more important selling points than they once were. What, besides design and performance, is there to distinguish one model from another? Obviously, a Lexus will perform better and be more fun to drive than a four-cylinder sedan that costs ten thousand dollars, but, increasingly, it is what the car looks like that sells it. This year, Nissan chose Jerry Hirshberg, the talented head of its American design studio, to be the spokesman for Nissan's television commercials, making him arguably even better known outside the industry than J. Mays is. At Chrysler, Tom Gale, the head designer in the post-Lee Iacocca era, created a strong design identity for all the company's cars, and this is used as a corporate selling point. Chrysler's commitment to design was underscored in late June with the announcement that Freeman Thomas—who worked with Mays at Audi, and played a major role in developing the new Beetle and the Aud TT—has been hired as vice-president of advanced produc design, making him a possibl successor to Gale and a rival to Mays. Only General Motors

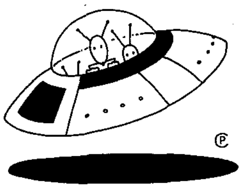


which is notoriously bureaucratic and slow-moving, seems not to have put design front and center in the way it conceives its products and presents them to the public.

Chrysler cars produced under Tom Gale all have a fluid, wedgelike look—somewhat futuristic. Ford, in contrast, is a collection of distinct international brands. The company believes that Jaguars sell better the more Jaguar-like they are, and that people who buy a Volvo do so because they want a Volvo, and nothing will be gained by making a Volvo look more like some kind of Ford. Whatever gives a car its distinct identity is supposed to be passed on to new models. For example, Lincoln connotes some general notion of American luxury. So Ford developed the Lincoln Navigator, a phenomenally successful, oversized sport-utility vehicle that costs forty-five thousand dollars. "If we were thinking only in terms of demographics, we would have developed another car for the older people who drive the Lincoln Town Car," Jim Schroer, Ford's vice-president in charge of global marketing, says. "But if I really understand this brand, Lincoln, then where can I take it? To a minivan? To a truck? What would a Lincoln minivan look like? You define a brand by its intangible psychological essence, not by its demographics. And the thing that makes J. Mays unique is that, unlike most great designers, he understands all of this."

One of the "concept cars" that Mays showed alongside the new Thunderbird at this year's Detroit auto show was a strange vehicle called the Lincoln Blackwood, a pickup-truck version of the Navigator. It was created by literally cutting off the back end of the body of a Navigator and replacing it with a closed cargo bin, which was covered in black African wenge-wood panels alternating with aluminum slats. It seems absurd—what possible demand could there be for a super-luxurious pickup truck?—but the Navigator is one of the most profitable vehicles Ford has ever built, and there are probably enough rich ranchers, or people who think it would be fun to look like rich ranchers, to create a market for the Blackwood, too.

The popularity of models like the Navigator, and the possibility of building cars like the Blackwood or the new Thunderbird, underscores the extent to which the car business has become fragmented into specialized markets. In the same way that television networks and general magazines have given way to cable channels and special-interest magazines, and even radio stations have shifted their programming to serve narrower and narrower categories, cars aimed at small segments of the market have eaten away at the midsize sedans that once filled the highways. Carmakers can produce numerous different vehicles from the same "platform," or basic mechanical structure, which permits a far greater degree of variation than before. Lincoln and Jaguar, for example, now have a shared platform that is used to make two completely different midsize sports sedans, the Jaguar S-type and the Lincoln LS. They look different (at least from the front), their interiors are different, and they drive differently. But their underpinnings are similar, which allowed Jaguar and Lincoln to share the development costs of an entirely new vehicle that neither division could have comfortably afforded on its own.



The Taurus, Ford's main, middle-market sedan, still sells well, although the car was badly hurt in 1997, when it was redesigned with an "oval" theme. Ovals—inspired by the oval in Ford's logo—formed the shape of the back window and many of the elements of the interior, including the dashboard controls. But the oval was a gimmick that had no relation to the function of the car. Sales fell, as potential Taurus purchasers—always the most conservative and cautious buyers—headed to the safer, if duller, precincts of the Honda Accord and the Toyota Camry. "It looked slippery, fluid—it sent a totally mixed message to the customer," Helmuth Schrader says. "Sometimes it is a danger to try too much with one product—to try to appeal to too many customers with one brand." Ford has revised the design, and a new Taurus will be on the market this fall. It doesn't have ovals, or much flair at all, actually. Mays is not particularly proud of it, but if the company gets its bread-and-butter model back on track, the profits can go into more interesting projects, like the Blackwood.

What Mays can accomplish at the head of a design operation as vast as Ford's remains to be seen. Some people in the design world think that he has become too much of a company man already. He has made the biggest impact so far with the Thunderbird, the Blackwood, and the futuristic, swooping (my)mercury, which is not intended for production but supposed to convey in some subliminal way that Mercury is more than "a Ford with a little more chrome slapped on," as Mays puts it. Following Jac Nasser's orders that all the Ford brands be shown together at the Detroit auto show this year, he worked with the London design studio Imagination to put together a huge, two-story display in which each brand was given a setting inspired by the work of an architect—Frank Lloyd Wright for Lincoln, Mies van der Rohe for Aston Martin, Zaha Hadid for Mercury. It was a far cry from the fake rocks on which Chrysler has for years presented the Jeep Grand Cherokee.

Mays's goal seems to be to make Fords that have as much design integrity as Audis and are as likable and popular as new Beetles. "A vehicle doesn't necessarily have to be only to get you to your destination," he says. "It can be your destination." I asked him if that wasn't also true in the nineteen-fifties, in the day of Harley Earl. "In the fifties, the metaphors involved nothing but jet aircraft or sex," Mays said. "Now we want a metaphor that is more sophisticated. People feel they cannot be without entertainment for even five minutes today." He paused for a moment. "I do consider what we do here to be some form of entertainment." ♦

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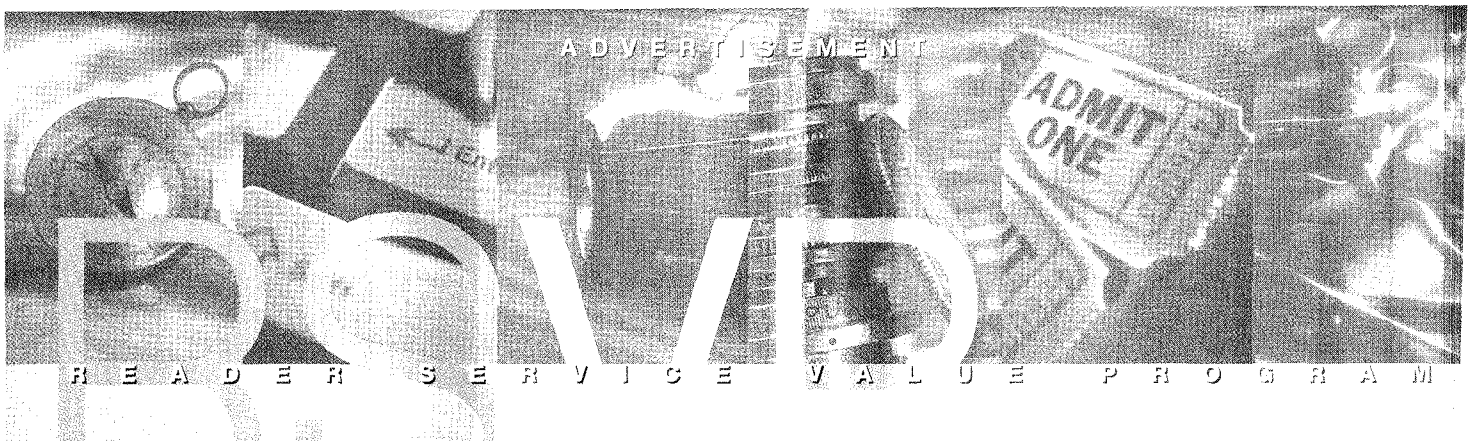

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ANNALS OF SCIENCE

HOW TO PREDICT EVERYTHING

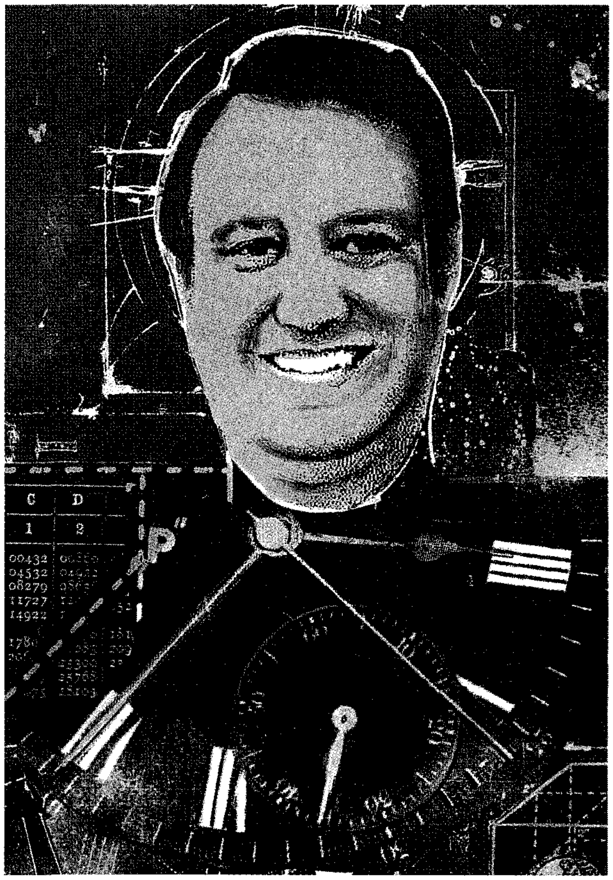
Has the physicist J. Richard Gott really found a way?

BY TIMOTHY FERRIS

J. RICHARD GOTT III, the celebrated Princeton astrophysicist, has always been interested in predicting the future of things, but only recently has he got around to forecasting how long Broadway plays will run. Gott started big. In the seventies, he and several colleagues published an influential paper arguing that the universe is geometrically "open"—meaning that it will go on expanding forever. Then, building on research pioneered by Kip Thorne, the eminent black-hole theorist at Caltech, he identified circumstances under which time travel into the past might be possible, inside black holes. This work has held up well, and has contributed to Gott's growing reputation as a provocateur whose ideas, although sometimes startling, are difficult to dismiss.

Physicists are good at predicting the behavior of simple systems like the universe (which, typically, is modelled as if it were a gas) and black holes (from within which, one may rest assured, no reporter will ever file dispatches). But neither physics nor any other science has had much success in predicting what is to become of the human species, or whether a Broadway musical will make money. Now that Gott has waded into those waters, one naturally wonders whether he has at last gone too far. To find out, I asked him, over dinner, how his predictions were faring.

"Quite well, actually. I'm batting a thousand," Gott replied, with his customary ebullience. A sunny, moon-faced man with a lilting voice that creaks like an old attic beam and is rounded by a vintage Kentucky accent (he's from Louisville), Gott, who is fifty-two, is invariably cheerful; in the more than twenty years that I've known him, I've never heard him utter a discouraging word. He's exquisitely serious about science, and is given to long-playing discourses—he can spend forty minutes answering a question without wasting a word—but a playful irony is seldom far from the thread of his conversation. Once, when presenting a paper on his time-travel research—work that has led to the discovery of a mechanism by which the universe could, theoretically, have created itself—he claimed to be an emissary from the future, proffering as evidence the consideration that nobody in the present could find a cranberry sports coat as vivid as the one he was wearing. On this occasion, he was, as is his custom, dressed brightly, in a neon-blue sports coat, a green shirt, and a rainbow tie; a collapsible umbrella projected from his hip pocket like a nightstick. He reached into a large brown attaché case and produced a sheaf of papers that he arrayed on the table in front of him, moving aside a Coke he'd ordered in lieu of a cocktail.



Gott's predictions are often far-reaching and broad, but so far he's batting a thousand.

"On May 27, 1993, I looked up all the plays that were listed in *The New Yorker*—Broadway and Off Broadway plays and musicals—and called up each of the theatres and asked when each play had opened," Gott said, drawing my attention to the top sheet of paper. It listed the plays in the order of their longevity, from "Later Life," which had then been open for four days and was to close after forty-five days, to "The Fantasticks," which had been running for twelve thousand seventy-seven days and was still open. "I predicted how long each would run, based solely on how long it had been running already. Forty-four shows were playing at the time. So far, thirty-six of them have closed, all in agreement with my predictions of how long they would last. And the others, which are still running, are also within the range I'd predicted. So, as I say, I'm batting a thousand so far. But I should be right ninety-five per cent of the time, since these predictions are made to a ninety-five-per-cent confidence level."

IT must be said that Gott's predictions are, well, broad. He predicted, for instance, that "Marisol," which had been open for a week when he called the theatres, would close in less than thirty-nine weeks; it lasted ten more days. To "Cats," which had then been running for three thousand eight hundred and eighty-five days, Gott assigned a longevity of not less than a hundred days and not more than four hundred and fourteen years. Even theatregoers who took literally the newspaper advertisements proclaiming "'Cats': Now and Forever" probably do not expect it to be on the boards in the year

2407. The significance of Gott's approach resides not in any likely improvement in backers' ability to handicap theatrical productions but in its startling originality and its ability to address issues previously inaccessible to scientific inquiry, such as predicting how long the human species will endure. I asked Gott for some background.

"My approach is based on the Copernican principle, which has been one of the most famous and successful scientific hypotheses in the history of science," he said. "It's named after Nicolaus Copernicus, who proved that the earth is not the center of the universe; and it's simply the idea that your location is not special. The more we've learned about the universe, the more non-special our location has looked. The earth is orbiting an ordinary star in an ordinary galaxy. The reason the Copernican principle works is that, of all the places for intelligent observers to be, there are by definition only a few special places and many non-special places. So you're simply more likely to be in one of the many non-special places.

"The predictions that I make are based on applying this principle to time. I first thought of it in 1969. I'd just graduated from Harvard and was travelling around Europe, and I visited the Berlin Wall. People at that time wondered how long the Wall might last. Was it a temporary aberration, or a permanent fixture of modern Europe? Standing at the Wall in 1969, I made the following argument, using the Copernican principle. I said, Well, there's nothing special about the timing of my visit. I'm just travelling—you know, Europe on five dollars a day—and I'm observing the Wall because it happens to be here. My visit is random in time. So if I divide the Wall's total history, from the beginning to the end, into four quarters, and I'm located randomly somewhere in there, there's a fifty-per-cent chance that I'm in the middle two quarters—that means, not in the first quarter and not in the fourth quarter.

"Let's suppose that I'm at the beginning of that middle fifty per cent. In that case, one quarter of the Wall's ultimate history has passed, and there are three quarters left in the future. In that case, the future's three times as long as the past. On the other hand, if I'm at the other end, then three quarters have happened already, and there's one quarter left in the future. In that case, the future is one-third as long as the past.

"Let's see," I interjected. "How old was the Wall at that time?"

"Eight years," Gott replied. "So I said to a friend, 'There's a fifty-per-cent chance that the Wall's future duration will be between two-thirds of a year and twenty-four years.' Twenty years later, in 1989, the Wall came down, within those two limits that I had predicted. I thought, Well, you know, maybe I should write this up."

Gott did precisely that, in a paper published in the journal *Nature* on May 27, 1993—and that was the day he called around to find out how long the plays had been running. "I picked plays because they are subject to all sorts of chaotic effects—the star could get sick, there could be a fire in the Broadway district," Gott said. "Recently, it's come to be understood that systems may behave chaotically and therefore be unpredictable. You know, a butterfly in the Amazon can affect the weather thousands of miles away, that sort of thing. This has led some people to say that predicting the future of complex systems is impossible. Which is true if you are concerned with the precise specifics. To predict the name of the President of the United States in the year 2085, for instance, is impossible. But if you ask the right question maybe you can get an interesting answer."

THE question that Gott has been asking lately is how long the human species is going to last. Since scientists generally make predictions at the ninety-five-per-cent confidence level, Gott begins with the assumption that you and I, having no reason to think we've been born in a special time, are probably living during the middle ninety-five per cent of the ultimate duration of our species. In other words, we're probably living neither during the first two and a half per cent nor during the last two and a half per cent of all the time that human beings will have existed.

"*Homo sapiens* has been around for two hundred thousand years," Gott said, once we'd finished our entrées. "That's how long our past is. Two and a half per cent is equal to one-fortieth, sc the future is probably at least one-thirty-ninth as long as the past but no more than thirty-nine times the past. I we divide two hundred thousand year by thirty-nine, we get about fifty-on hundred years. If we multiply it b

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REMEMBERING THE GOLDEN AGE

When every comma was a pause for meaning,
inflected speech ran together, a merging of rivers
confluent, and everyone but the slaves understood
the turn of the phrase; everyone caught
the I in the I's of *am staying*, *am going*.

When mere inflection implied
the *in*, *to*, over, under—making,
within the bounds of the island
at least, a universal, inflected
language; a heaven of breath
in pasture; a meal, thyme,
at the sacred table—

the hills of the play in the air
in the limestone bowl of the double
theatre, *amphitheatrum*, could even be sung.
And, except for the baffled slaves underneath,
everybody as one knew *pax*, *antebellum;* peace or pact,
a clearly inflected language, a "universal" comprehension.

—ELIZABETH MACKLIN

thirty-nine, we get 7.8 million years. So if our location in human history is not special, there's a ninety-five-per-cent chance we're in the middle ninety-five per cent of it. Therefore the human future is probably going to last longer than fifty-one hundred years but less than 7.8 million years.

"Now, those numbers are interesting, because they give us a total longevity that's comparable to that of other species. The predicted total lifetime of the human species is quite similar to the ranges we see for other species—species that have gone extinct. *Homo erectus*, our ancestor species, lasted for about 1.6 million years. The Neanderthals went extinct after about three hundred thousand years. The mean duration for all mammal species is two million years."

I remarked that in my experience most people either think we're going to hell in a handbasket or assume that we're going to be around for a very long time. Recently, I went on to say, I tested this by E-mailing a dozen friends to ask their predictions. Sure enough, the majority of those who hazarded a guess fell into two camps, clustered around the extremes. Most predicted either that human beings will last less than two hundred years or that we're good for more than ten million years.

"That's because people like to think they're living in special times," Gott observed. "We like to think of ourselves as near the beginning of things, or in an apocalyptic situation near the end. It's more dramatic that way. A lot of people might say, 'Oh, but we are in a special epoch. We're in the epoch when men first went to the moon, when we discovered genetic engineering, nuclear energy, and so forth.' My answer to this is that the Copernican principle predicts that you will be living in a high-population century—most people do, just as most people come from cities with higher than average populations, in larger than average nations. It's people who make discoveries, so if you live when there are more people around, you should expect to live in an age when a lot of interesting discoveries are being made."

The waiter came with the check. I asked him in what year the Four Seasons had opened. "In 1959," he answered instantly.

"That's a good example," Gott said, whipping out a pocket calculator. "Let's see, 1959 was thirty-nine years ago. One-thirty-ninth of thirty-nine is one year. Thirty-nine times thirty-nine years is fifteen hundred and twenty-one years. So I predict, at a ninety-five-per-cent confidence level, that this restaurant will still be open in a year but will have closed prior to the year—let's see—3519! Because, you know, there's nothing special about our happening to be here this particular evening. We just came here because the restaurant happens to be here now."

We strolled back to my hotel, and there I turned on a tape recorder, while Gott, who likes to talk late into the night, put his feet up. I asked him about what is, to me, the most disturbing aspect of his theory—the ice water it throws on the optimists who expect human beings to survive pretty much forever.

"People think that, sure, other species go out of business every million or so years, but since we're smarter than they are we will last longer. Unfortunately, the facts don't really bear this out," Gott said. "I mean, Einstein was very, very smart, but he didn't live longer than the rest of us. Smartness doesn't seem to be correlated very well with longevity in the animal kingdom, right up to and including very smart species, similar to us. Mammals are smart, but mammals haven't lasted any longer than other species. The Neanderthals and *Homo erectus* and the other hominid species, of which there were a number, also went extinct on comparable time scales. And our past track record is right in the same league. If the human race is actually to last for a billion years, we today are in the very, very beginning of it, and it would be quite a coincidence that we were so lucky as to be among the very first humans. It would also be a coincidence that we came along at just the right time to fool us into thinking that our longevity is about the same as other species'. That's like expecting that your last name falls in the first fortieth of the names in the Manhattan phone book, between Aaron and Antonio. It probably doesn't."

GOTT, after rummaging around in his attaché case, produced a set of dominoes, which he set up in five stacks of doubling height, starting with one domino and ending with a stack of sixteen. "These dominoes represent the human population over time," he said. "We've gone through a period of expo-

Gahan Wilson

"Maybe if we put stone statues in their place, no one will notice that they've flown away."

"I can't help thinking of the lyrics to that old song: 'I want to sex you up.'"

nential growth, so I have one, two, four, eight, and then sixteen dominoes. Now, what's going to happen in the future? One prospect is that the population will reach a peak, then go back down at a similar rate. This is something that has happened to many species: you have an exponential growth rate that reaches a peak and then something bad happens and you have an exponential decline. In that case, you would expect to be right about here, near the peak. Most people are. And that's where we are."

I counted the dominoes. There were sixteen in the stack representing the present and only fifteen in all the preceding four stacks combined. "That's the non-special place to be—in a population peak, not near the beginning or near the end," Gott said cheerfully. "It's like your place of birth. I come from Jefferson County, which happens to be the most populous county of all the hundred and twenty counties in Kentucky. That's not an accident; it's just likely. And here we are, having this conversation in New York City, where there are a lot of people. Sometimes people say, 'Why is it I always find myself in the longest line at the post office?' But if the lines have various lengths most people are going to find themselves in the longer of the lines. If there's any variation in the length of the lines, you're likely to end up in one of the longer ones simply because there are more people in those lines."

Gott took out some more dominoes and made several additional stacks, each as tall as the one marking the present. "Now let's look at a more optimistic model—one in which, following the period of exponential growth, the population reaches equilibrium and stays at something like current levels far into the future," he said. "What's wrong with this model? Well, if that's what's going to happen, if we're going to have a global population of, say, five or ten billion for millions of years to come, then almost every human ever to be born lives out here on the long plateau. The Copernican question is: If the future is going to be like that, why don't you and I live on the plateau? Why don't we, looking back, see that the world population has remained level for millions of years? We don't, so if the optimistic prediction is right, then you and I are in a very special place. But one is not likely to be special. Whereas if the population is going to decline, then we're living in exactly a typical place, just as one would expect."

I poured myself a Scotch-and-water. This is the part of Gott's argument that most troubles me—not because I can find fault with it but because I can't. It ranks as one of the most baleful prognostications of the human fate since Malthus.

Gott went happily on, tapping his right index finger on the domino plateau. "A lot of people say, 'Well, our species may go out of existence, but we'll be replaced by smarter, genetically engineered human beings. We'll have many descendant species, so we shouldn't mourn if *Homo sapiens* goes extinct, because we'll be replaced by something much better.' But, as Mr. Darwin noted, most species do not leave any descendants. A few do, and they leave a lot: there are sixteen species of rodents. Our genus, *Homo*, is down to one. We're like the horse. There used to be several, now there's only one. There used to be several different hominid species—the Neanderthals and us, for example—and now we're down to one. This is not a good sign.

"Some say that we are destined to turn ourselves into intelligent computers that live forever. But, if you believe that, you have to ask yourself, 'Why am I not an intelligent computer? Why am I not genetically engineered?' If you believe that we are going to venture into space and colonize the galaxy, you have to ask yourself, 'Why am I not a space colonist?' Because, if colonization occurs, almost everyone is a colonist. In fact, you and I are continental colonists. We're living here in North America. People started out in Africa; we're not from the original continent. Now, travel between continents is pretty easy, but travel between stars, to set up colonies on other star systems, that's more difficult. So where do you expect to find yourself by the Copernican principle? You expect to find yourself at a niche that's easily filled up, where the next jump is difficult. And that's where we are."

THE hour was approaching midnight, and I was feeling a bit fatalistic. Gott, however, has a more upbeat reaction to his conclusions. He thinks that we should improve our survival chances by colonizing Mars, that we need to do it promptly, and that that should be the goal of the space program.

"The manned space program is thirty-eight years old, so it's been around only a short time," he said. "Things that haven't been around a very long time are not likely to be around very long in the future. So there's a real danger that we will quit it, as the Chinese did in the fifteenth century. They explored Africa, came back with a giraffe that everybody wondered at, and then they just quit. The period of great Egyptian pyramid-building lasted about a century from the first to the biggest; then there was a long, slow decline during which the Egyptians built crummy ones. So there's a danger that we'll end up stuck on the earth—that if we wait too long we may have a population that's too small to respond to an emergency or to do space colonization. Should something bad take us by surprise in a hundred and fifty thousand years—an epidemic, or something like that—we'd be saying, 'We should have colonized back there in the twenty-first century, while we had the chance.'

"I'm not saying that Mars isn't dangerous, but colonizing Mars would increase our survival prospects by giving us two chances in the casino of life. It's often said that people have a wanderlust, but why do we have this wanderlust? Because it's good biological sense to spread out and multiply, to make copies of yourself. The Greeks had all their books in the Alexandrian library and they guarded it very well, but eventually the thing burned down. The only reason we have seven of Sophocles' hundred and twenty plays, the rest having been lost, is that somebody copied them and put them elsewhere. So we should copy ourselves. This has been life's good strategy for 3.8 billion years—to make copies and spread out, because entropy's trying to cut you down. I think the very first astronauts sent to Mars should be people who are prepared to stay on and start a colony. Why bring them back just to give them a ticker-tape parade in New York City? Leave them there!"

Outside, at the curb, I waved goodbye as Gott's car headed crosstown, bound for Princeton. That car is about a year old, I thought, so it's likely to keep running for more than a week but less than thirty-nine more years. New York City was first settled in 1626; that gives it nine and a half to 14,500 years to go. Jupiter stood high in the southern sky, warranteed for at least another hundred and fourteen million years. Science, like art, changes the way one looks at things. ♦

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LETTER FROM ITALY

A SINKING FEELING

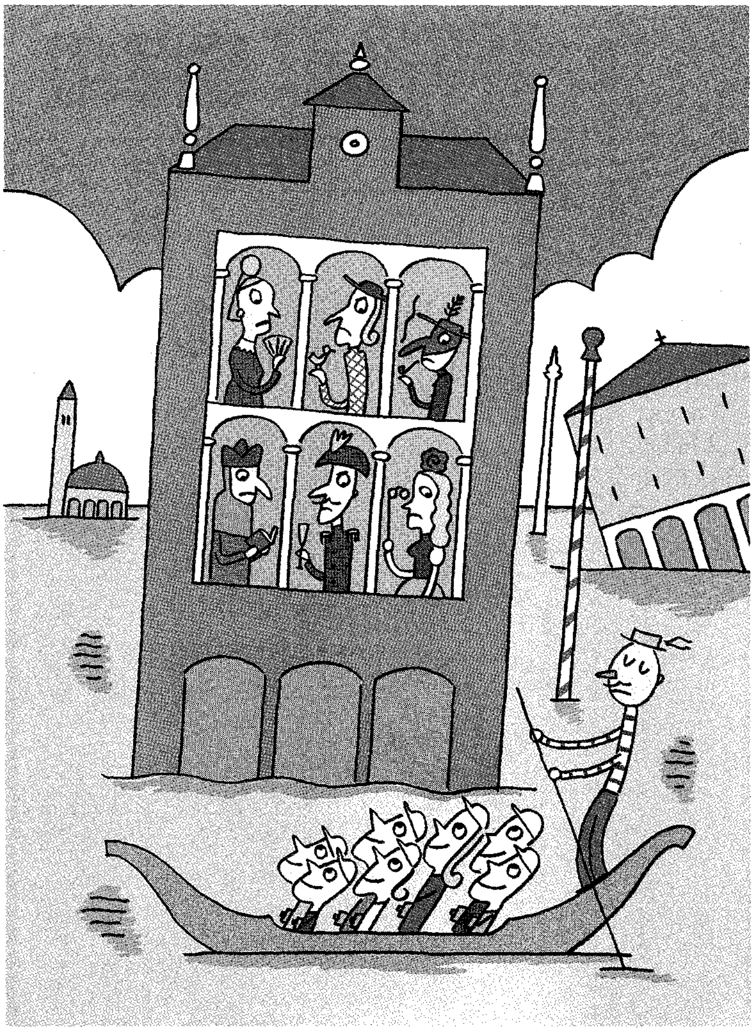
Doesn’t Venice want to be saved?

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

THIS has been a thoroughly humiliating year for the people of Venice. The city’s population of doddering countesses and hapless roués has declined to its lowest level since long before the fall of the Serenissima, two hundred years ago. It has been three years since La Fenice, the wondrous eighteenth-century opera house, which presented the premières of “Rigoletto” and “La Traviata,” burned to the ground. Avarice, graft, and a thick web of lawsuits have insured that it will be a long time before anyone sings a note there again. The town fathers were deeply offended this spring by the opening in Las Vegas of a billion-dollar virtual version of their city called the Venetian Resort, but they were even more offended at not having been asked to help design it. Explaining why he refused to travel to Las Vegas for the opening, Massimo Cacciari, the mayor of the real city, said, “Besides being a mega-galactic example of kitsch, the project was developed without involving the city of Venice in the slightest bit.”

One is supposed to regard Venice, which has been stitched together over centuries from a few lonely scraps of land into an enchanted republic, as a mystical refuge. But to do that is getting harder every year. Venetians are famously proud and aloof, and when they speak about their city they refer to sixteenth-century naval victories and the perfidy of Napoleon as if both issues affected them today. The Mayor, a philosopher and a man of the left, often blames Venetian troubles on the West’s craven need for memorabilia, and has commissioned an advertising campaign that will feature rats, dead pigeons, and canals cluttered with refuse—all in an attempt to beat back the hordes who invade the city by water every day, only to withdraw by nightfall. “Venice needs intelligent visitors, not the tourists who assault it, who run in, grab what they want, and run out again,” Cacciari said in May when he described the new campaign, which has been put together by Oliviero Toscani, the man behind the controversial advertisements for Benetton. “We need visitors who are not seeing the picture-postcard image of Venice, but who realize what problems the city faces. *Basta* with the gondolas and the Bridge of Sighs.”

What other city so wholly dependent on tourists has shown such contempt for them? Cacciari says he is sick to death of the bridge-and-tunnel crowd—the groups of Poles and Slovenians who race about the city and then, less than six hours later, roll on toward Padua to check out Giotto’s chapel. He wants guests who will come for a while, stay at the Cipriani, spend their money in the pricey shops on St. Mark’s Square, and stroll purposelessly along the Riva degli Schiavoni. It is an utterly naïve and hopeless desire. As Mary McCarthy pointed out more than forty years ago (in “Venice Observed”), Venice is a “folding picture-postcard of itself”: the tourist Venice *is* Venice, and it is folly to pretend anything else. “It has been part museum, part amusement park,” she wrote, “living off the entrance fees of tourists, ever since the early eighteenth century when its former sources of revenue ran dry.”



Since the great flood, Venetians have rebuffed nearly every attempt to rescue their fetid waterways, crumbling alleys, and priceless art.

Things have been tumbling steadily since McCarthy wrote those words. In Venice today, there are nearly twice as many women who are older than seventy-five than women who are younger than eighteen. Just three per cent of the population is in elementary school—an astonishingly bleak figure, even in the country that for much of the past decade has had the lowest birth rate on earth. But, if this year has been burdensome, the year 2000—when the millennium and the Papal Jubilee promise to bring as many as twenty million people to Venice—will be far worse. Venetian officials have mumbled darkly about selling tickets or putting quotas on the number of visitors who may enter each day. None of that will be possible; Venice is still not quite Disneyland. But, in the end, concern is understandable, because the city is in bad shape.

More than thirty years after the great flood of 1966, when the world first came to understand how fragile the place is—after three decades of discussion by governments from the local tribunals of the Veneto to the United Nations, after half the population has fled and dozens of commissions have been appointed, disbanded, and reformed, and their recommendations ignored with increasing contempt, and after international experts have endorsed a giant rescue plan appropriately called Project Moses, which would bring a sophisticated system of floating barriers to the waters of the lagoon—Venetians continue to spurn outside efforts to rescue their doomed maze of fetid waterways, crumbling alleys, and priceless art.

"Venice is in great immediate peril," Rafael L. Bras told me recently. "And I mean immediate." Bras is a professor of civil and environmental engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has consulted on water projects of varying immensity from San Juan to the Nile, and last year he led (yet another) team of international consultants who urged Venice to move rapidly forward with Project Moses. The project would deploy a series of giant hinged flaps at the entrances to the lagoon. Normally, they would be invisible, lying beneath the water, but when tides became high enough they could be raised within an hour to protect Venice from the surging Adriatic.

The project has been tough to sell, though. The Green Party and its allies still matter in Venice. They embody the popular sentimental notion that the city has finally, after centuries, fallen to invaders. The Greens talk constantly about the "natural" harmony of the lagoon and say the project would destroy its ecological balance: they somehow forget that Venice's lagoon is highly polluted, deeply dependent on human intervention, and no longer natural in any way.

The Moses plan has been around for twenty years, and the need for it has become glaringly obvious. But after the M.I.T. group said that the barriers were essential—and a second team of world experts, appointed by the Italian government, said the same thing—the city simply shrugged and formed another committee. A few weeks after that, Edo Ronchi, the Italian Environmental Minister (and a Green), surprised no one by postponing Moses until more studies could be completed.

"Those recommendations were biased," Stefano Boato, a local Green Party leader who is a professor of urban planning at Venice's University of Architecture, told me. "These are foreigners who were paid to come here and agree to this plan. It was a fix. Why should we listen?"

ONE afternoon not long ago, I walked over to the Compagnia della Vela, a turn-of-the-century yacht club whose terrace spreads along the Grand Canal just off St. Mark's Square, near Harry's Bar. I was on my way to meet Gianpietro Zucchetta, a giant fellow with glasses the size of picture frames and one of those mustacheless beards favored by C. Everett Koop and Abraham Lincoln, for whom he could have been a body double. Zucchetta is a special Venetian type. He has one wife, three cats, no children, and is obsessed by the city of his birth. Zucchetta is the author of "Venice Bridge by Bridge," a two-volume, twelve-pound work that treats each of the island's four hundred and forty-six bridges as if it were a cherished young member of a royal family. He has also published several other exhaustive works on Venetian history. "I wanted to leave some documentation of this city when it is gone," he said.

That is not something that he expects to take centuries, by the way. "We certainly have a generation left. We may even have two," he told me while we sipped prosecco and stared at the vaporetti crisscrossing their way down the Grand Canal. Dozens of men were selling tchotchkes on the walkway below us—bad sketches of frail boats, the type of tiny stuffed toys that come with Happy Meals, and pictures of the great Venetian muse Cindy Crawford. "I don't really think anyone serious believes there will be a Venice in a hundred years," he continued evenly. "I don't see how there can be." Zucchetta is not given to gloomy projections, and he is well aware that predicting the death of Venice is obvious and trite. He was the first Venetian I spoke with (but not the only one) to make fun of Byron's over-

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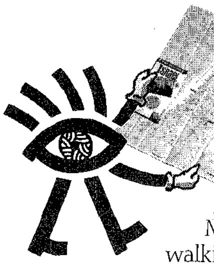

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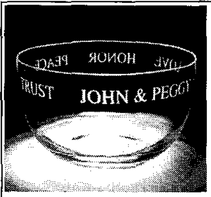

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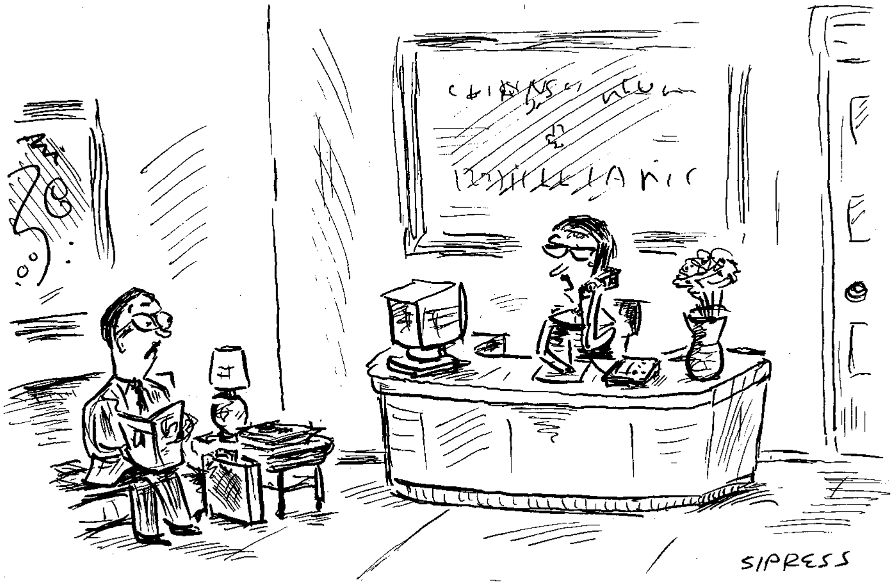

"He's dead. Would you like his voice mail?"

• •

wrought lines about the inevitable fate of the city:

> Oh Venice! Venice! When thy marble walls
> Are level with the waters, there shall be
> A cry of nations o'er thy sunken halls,
> A loud lament along the sweeping sea!

Like any normal Venetian, Zucchetta shrugs off such hysteria, but he has nevertheless come to believe that Byron had a point about the sunken halls. It is a belief he came to in a most unusual way.

"A few years ago, I decided to build an exact replica of Casanova's gondola," he told me. It was a famous boat, because Casanova was perhaps the eighteenth century's most famous man about the waterways. Zucchetta began his project as a lark, but as a serious lark, because he built the boat to Casanova's specifications. "It was all for fun," he went on. "I love boats. But when it was built I realized that the water is now too high in many of the canals for the gondola to pass beneath the bridges. It's the same weight, size, and type as Casanova's. But you cannot use it to move around the city anymore. That scared me, because I realized then that the big floods aren't the problem for Venice. The small ones are."

MUCH is made of the possibility of a single, devastating flood that, through a combination of high tides, climatic depressions in the Adriatic, and hellacious siroccos (powerful winds from the southeast that carry great humidity and begin, typically, in the deserts of North Africa), could strike the city. That is what happened in 1966. Venetians talk about the *acqua alta*—high water—the way Angelenos talk about "the big one." They worry far more, however, about pollution, sewage problems, and their inability to cram themselves into overcrowded boats. "Everyone here can put on a pair of gum boots a few times a year," Armando Danella told me. He is the chief of special laws for Venice—its urban-planning director. "A pileup on the highway will kill more people than floods in Venice," he said. "Remember, in 1966 nobody even died. That is not our problem. Tourists are our problem. It would be nice to live like a normal person. You can't get home and you can't get to work. The vaporetti are always full of tourists."

If Venice banned tourists tomorrow, though, its water problems would still keep getting worse. At the beginning of this century, St. Mark's Square was flooded about six times a year. By 1989, it was flooded forty times, and in 1996 the number was ninety-nine. The problem goes back (as most things in the city do) to the way Venice has been built since the tenth century. First, oak piles are driven far enough into the ground to rest on compressed clay at the bottom of the lagoon. Wooden planks are placed on top of them. Then, finally, a layer of Istrian stone—a kind of marble—is used as a foundation beneath the palazzi and the streets of the city. There is no problem if the stones get wet a couple of times a year. But if they get wet every month—as they have done for at least a decade—they stay wet. When they don't dry out, a mortar version of mildew sets in: salt water moves up into the stone through capillary action, the stones crack, and the foundation of the city starts to literally fall apart.

That is what is happening now. Thanks largely to the warming of the world's oceans, the sea level around Venice has risen about four and a half inches since 1900. At the same time, the land base on which the city is built has subsided by more than eight inches. Meteorologists and oceanographers who focus on global climate change predict that seas, including the Adriatic, will be at least eight inches higher by the middle of the next century. That would put Venice under water at least half of the year. In many other countries, among them England and the Netherlands, hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent in preparation for the sea change to come. Both London and Rotterdam already use floating barriers similar to the ones proposed for Venice.

In Venice, however, people are not convinced that meteorological and physical realities of the past—or the future—apply to them. "The sea is so tricky," Armando Danella told me during our conversation in his office. "Yes, it is rising. In the world, absolutely. But it cannot be proved that the water will rise in the upper Adriatic. Perhaps it will. But we don't know for sure, because there is no proof."

When I asked him how you could prove something that would take place in the future, he looked at me as if I had finally come to understand the Venetian mind. "Exactly," he said, smiling. "That is just my point."

THE average Venetian couldn't care less about all this nonsense. When I tried to talk to gondoliers (whose fees start at eighty-five dollars for a brief, predictable ride) about the water problems, they laughed me off with a wave of their ornamental straw hats. "I am more concerned about whether one of your bombs falls on us than whether we will be swallowed by the sea," one of them told me, the week after NATO pilots accidentally dumped some cluster bombs in the waters off Chioggia, a fishing center south of Venice.

Most merchants don't mind the daily turnover in tourists. They live off kitsch, and they live pretty well. There seem to be a million places to buy glass beads and lace napkins in Venice—at ridiculous prices. There are, of course, many visitors who see the city the way Mayor Cacciari wants them to—staying for days, visiting the thirteenth-century glassworks of Murano and the alluring but spookily desolate island of Torcello. But the price of wandering the basic paths of Venice is higher than it has been in years, and since almost everyone leaves the city the day he arrives, there is no incentive to develop a culture that is kind to the consumer. There is, for that reason, a sort of abandon to the place that makes it seem like a permanent Weimar.

The oldest residents are often the fiercest opponents of change—by which they mean Project Moses or anything that reminds them that Venice is no longer an independent republic. Some of that is because they believe Venice has already accommodated itself too completely to the world; the rest, it seems, is a perfectly understandable fear of the future.

Countess Teresa Foscolo Foscari is perhaps the most prominent exception. She is willing not only to acknowledge the future but to embrace it. Known in her earlier days as the Red Countess, for political views that scandalized the upper class, she married into the family of Francesco Foscari, the famous Doge who led the republic in a ruinous series of wars against Milan in the fifteenth century (and who is the subject of Byron's tragedy "The Two Foscari" and of the Verdi opera). On her side of the family, Ugo Foscolo was a poet and novelist whose work, written during the Napoleonic era, is considered to be among the masterpieces of Italian literature. Teresa Foscolo Foscari was a founder of the Venetian branch of one of Italy's most important conservation organizations, Italia Nostra, and she has spent nearly every day of her eighty-three years in Venice.

I went to see her, in her flat, which takes up part of a frayed but still inviting palazzo on the edge of a quiet waterway. It was one of the season's first truly humid days. "What can I offer but coffee when the sirocco is hunting the city?" she asked, and then she instructed her butler, who was dressed in a black wool three-piece suit and who has been with her for fifty years, to make espresso. Her parlor was filled with lithographs, old rugs, and vases of freshly cut flowers. The Countess has white hair parted severely in the middle. Her face is deeply lined, but her eyes are bright, and she was eager to talk. After a preliminary lecture that touched on a thousand years of history, rambling through digressions on Freud, the decline of the family, and Venice's still strange relationship with Rome ("I am absolutely opposed to any talk of Venice as a separate republic," she told me, as if that issue might be put before parliament during this session. "It has to remain a part of Italy"), she got to her point.

"We have always been both isolated and defended by water," she said. "The lack of a bridge meant for so long we had freedom from the Church, true independence. But there was a price. We never grew up. Venice is intemperate—we never learned how to be citizens. So now our strength has become what is killing us." She walked over to a window and gazed at the sea, as if to consult the weather. Venice, she went on, has become too independent for its own good and it no longer has the right to be that way.

The butler brought our drinks. Outside, the boats were making their late-afternoon noises, and the water was lapping against the wall of the palazzo. "We need to be protected," the Countess said. "We are not alone anymore. They don't know history, even." She was referring to the city leaders and to the local chapter of Italia Nostra, which she no longer supports; she sees them as unrealistic and utopian. "In 1500, they rerouted the rivers to save the lagoon," she said. "Then they had resolve. Now they have nothing." After a while, she grew tired, and it was time for me to leave. "Thank you for coming," she said, rising slowly and offering her hand as her butler appeared to show me out. "And if you see the Greens tell them they have destroyed Paradise." ♦

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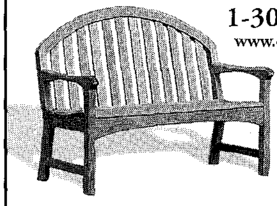

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE DEMON IN THE FREEZER

How smallpox, a disease officially eradicated twenty years ago, became the biggest bioterrorist threat we now face.

BY RICHARD PRESTON

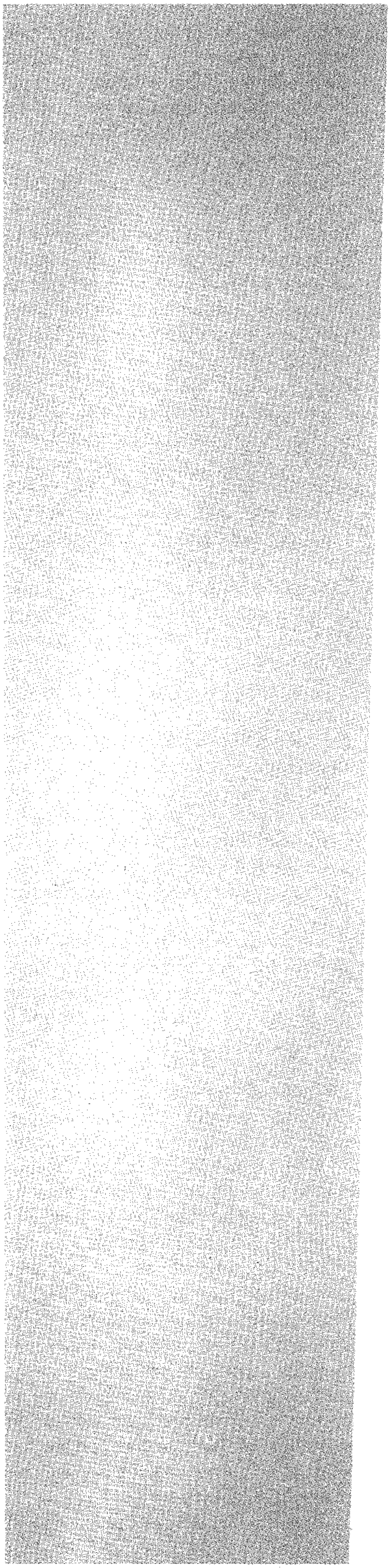
THE smallpox virus first became entangled with the human species somewhere between three thousand and twelve thousand years ago—possibly in Egypt at the time of the Pharaohs. Somewhere on earth at roughly that time, the virus jumped out of an unknown animal into its first human victim, and began to spread. Viruses are parasites that multiply inside the cells of their hosts, and they are the smallest life forms. Smallpox developed a deep affinity for human beings. It is thought to have killed more people than any other infectious disease, including the Black Death of the Middle Ages. It was declared eradicated from the human species in 1979, after a twelve-year effort by a team of doctors and health workers from the World Health Organization. Smallpox now exists only in laboratories.

Smallpox is explosively contagious, and it travels through the air. Virus particles in the mouth become airborne when the host talks. If you inhale a single particle of smallpox, you can come down with the disease. After you've been infected, there is a typical incubation period of ten days. During that time, you feel normal. Then the illness hits with a spike of fever, a backache, and vomiting, and a bit later tiny red spots appear all over the body. The spots turn into blisters, called pustules, and the pustules enlarge, filling with pressurized opalescent pus. The eruption of pustules is sometimes called the splitting of the dermis. The skin doesn't break, but splits horizontally, tearing away from its underlayers. The pustules become hard, bloated sacs the size of peas, encasing the body with pus, and the skin resembles a cobblestone street.

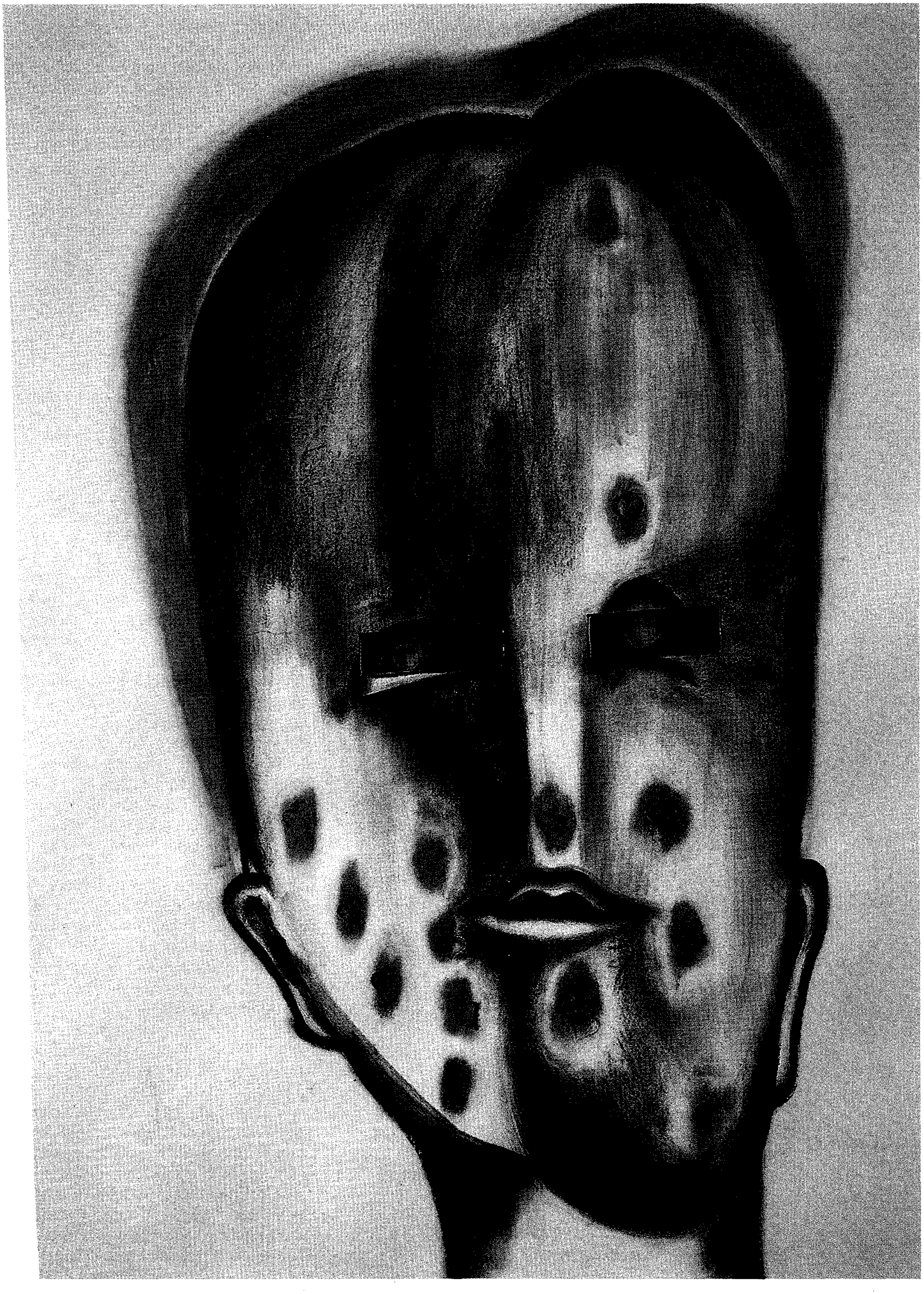
The pain of the splitting is extraordinary. People lose the ability to speak, and their eyes can squeeze shut with pustules, but they remain alert. Death comes with a breathing arrest or a heart attack or shock or an immune-system storm, though exactly how smallpox kills a person is not known. There are many mysteries about the smallpox virus. Since the seventeenth century, doctors have understood that if the pustules merge into sheets across the body the victim will usually die: the virus has split the whole skin. If the victim survives, the pustules turn into scabs and fall off, leaving scars. This is known as ordinary smallpox.

Some people develop extreme smallpox, which is loosely called black pox. Doctors separate black pox into two forms—flat smallpox and hemorrhagic smallpox. In a case of flat smallpox, the skin remains smooth and doesn't pustulate, but it darkens until it looks charred, and it can slip off the body in sheets. In hemorrhagic smallpox, black, unclotted blood oozes or runs from the mouth and other body orifices. Black pox is close to a hundred per cent fatal. If any sign of it appears in the body, the victim will almost certainly die. In the bloody cases, the virus destroys the linings of the throat, the stomach, the intestines, the rectum, and the vagina, and these membranes disintegrate. Fatal smallpox can destroy the body's entire skin—both the exterior skin and the interior skin that lines the passages of the body.

Smallpox virus's scientific name is variola. It means "spotted" in Latin, and it was given to the disease by a medieval bishop. The virus, as a life form, comes in two subspecies: *Variola minor* and *Variola major*. Minor is a weak mutant, and was first described in 1863 by doctors in Jamaica. People usually survive it. Classic major kills one out of three people if they



ENZO CUCCHI, "CUORE DI TESTA" (1995)/GALERIE BRUNO BISCHOFBERGER, ZURICH



haven't been vaccinated or if they've lost their immunity. The death rate with major can go higher—how much higher no one knows. *Variola major* killed half of its victims in an outbreak in Canada in 1924, and presumably many of them developed black pox. Smallpox is less contagious than measles but more contagious than mumps. It tends to go around until it has infected nearly everyone.

Most people today have no immunity to smallpox. The vaccine begins to wear off in many people after ten years. Mass vaccination for smallpox came to a worldwide halt around twenty-five years ago. There is now very little smallpox vaccine on hand in the United States or anywhere else in the world. The World Health Organization once had ten million doses of the vaccine in storage in Geneva, Switzerland, but in 1990 an advisory committee recommended that most of it be destroyed, feeling that smallpox was longer a threat. Nine and a half million doses are assumed to have been cooked in an oven, leaving the W.H.O. with a total supply of half a million doses—one dose of smallpox vaccine for every twelve thousand people on earth. A recent survey by the W.H.O. revealed that there is only one factory in the world that has recently made even a small quantity of the vaccine, and there may be no factory capable of making sizable amounts. The vaccine was discovered in the age of Thomas Jefferson, and making a lot of it would seem simple, but so far the United States government has been unable to get any made at all. Variola virus is now classified as a Biosafety Level 4 hot agent—the most dangerous kind of virus—because it is lethal, airborne, and highly contagious, and is now exotic to the human species, and there is not enough vaccine to stop an outbreak. Experts feel that the appearance of a single case of smallpox anywhere on earth would be a global medical emergency.

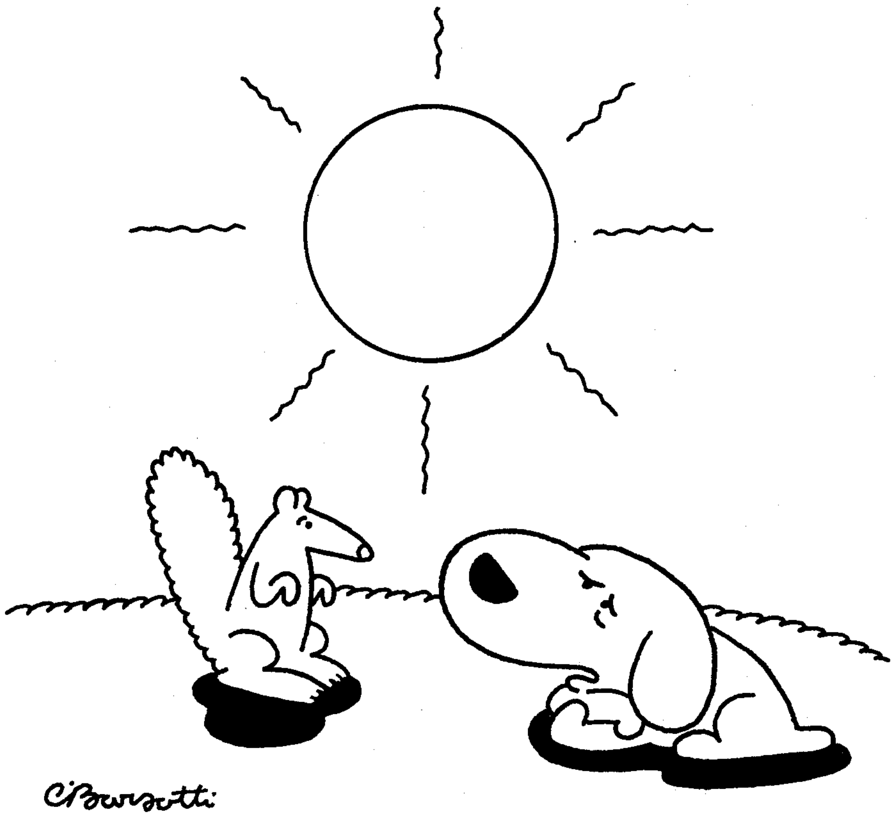
"I'd love to ask you in, Howard, but they start trading in Hong Kong in ten minutes."

At the present time, smallpox lives officially in only two repositories on the planet. One repository is in the United States, in a freezer at the headquarters of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in Atlanta—the C.D.C. The other official smallpox repository is in a freezer at a Russian virology institute called Vector, also known as the State Research Institute of Virology and Biotechnology, which is situated outside the city of Novosibirsk, in Siberia. Vector is a huge, financially troubled former virus-weapons-development facility—a kind of decayed Los Alamos of viruses—which is trying to convert to peaceful enterprises.

There is a growing suspicion among experts that the smallpox virus may also live unofficially in clandestine biowarfare laboratories in a number of countries around the world, including labs on military bases in Russia that are closed to outside observers. The Central Intelligence Agency has become deeply alarmed about smallpox. Since 1995, a number of leading American biologists and public-health doctors have been given classified national-security briefings on smallpox. They have been shown classified evidence that as recently as 1992 Russia had the apparent capability of launching strategic-weapons-grade smallpox in special biological warheads on giant SS-18 intercontinental missiles that were targeted on the major cities of the United States. In the summer of last year, North Korea fired a ballistic missile over Japan in a test, and the missile fell into the sea. Some knowledgeable observers thought that the missile could have been designed to carry a biologic warhead. If it had carried smallpox and landed in Japan, it could have devastated Japan's population: Japan has almost no smallpox vaccine on hand and its government seems to have no ability to deal with a biological attack. The United States government keeps a list of nations and groups that it suspects either have clandestine stocks of smallpox or seem to be trying to buy or steal the virus. The list is classified, but it is said to include Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Cuba, and Serbia. The list may also include the terrorist organization of Osama bin Laden and, possibly, the Aum Shinrikyo sect of Japan—a quasi-religious group that had Ph.D. biologists as members and a belief that an apocalyptic war will bring them worldwide power. Aum members released nerve gas in the Tokyo subway in 1995, and, as the year 2000 approaches, the group is still active in Japan and in Russia. In any case, the idea that smallpox lives in only two freezers was never anything more than a comfortable fiction. No one knows exactly who has smallpox today, or where they keep the virus, or what they intend to do with it.

THE man who is most widely credited with the eradication of smallpox from the human species is a doctor named Donald Ainslie Henderson. Everyone calls him D. A. Henderson. He was the director of the World Health Organization's Smallpox Eradication Unit from its inception, in 1966, to 1977, just before the last case occurred. "I'm one of many in the eradication," Henderson said to me once. "There's Frank Fenner, there's Isao Arita, Bill Foege, Nicole Grasset, Zdenek Jezek, Jock Copland, John Wickett—I could come up with fifty names. Let alone the tens of thousands who worked in the infected countries." Nevertheless, Henderson ran it. Smallpox killed at least three hundred million people in the twentieth century. During that time, humanity was largely immune to smallpox, which is not the case today. When D. A. Henderson arrived on the scene in 1966, two million people a year were dying of smallpox. In the years since the eradication effort began, Henderson and his team have effectively saved more than fifty million lives. This could be the most impressive achievement in the history of medicine. Henderson and his colleagues, however, have never received the Nobel Prize for their work.

D. A. Henderson is now a professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. He is the founder and the director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Studies, a think tank that considers what might be done to protect the American population during a biological event. The term "biological event" hardly existed two years ago, but it is now used by emergency planners and by the F.B.I. to mean a terrorist attack with a bioweapon—an unnatural event, caused by human intent.



"Consider yourself chased."

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Henderson lives with his wife in a arge brick house in Baltimore. I arrived here on a cold, drizzly Saturday, and he ambled to the door. Henderson is an imposing man, six feet two inches tall. He is seventy years old. He has broad shoulders and a broad, seamed, angular face, pointed ears that stick out at angles from his head, a brush of gray hair, metal-framed eyeglasses, sharp blue eyes, and an easygoing voice that can flash with calculation. He was wearing a red checked shirt, with suspenders that held up Saturday slacks.

"In the last ten days, we've had fourteen different anthrax scares," he remarked in an offhand way as we stood in the front hallway of his house and he loomed over me. He has a top-secret-level national-security clearance, and he hears about little bioterror events that don't get noticed by the media. He went on to say, "Everybody and his brother is threatening to use anthrax. This week, it happened in Atlanta, in Washington, D.C., in Michigan, and in California. It's largely hoaxes. Of course, a real bioterror event is going to happen one of these days."

We settled into easy chairs in the family room. The walls and shelves of the room were crowded with African and Asian sculptures and wooden Ethiopian crosses, which he had picked up in his global hunt for smallpox. A Japanese garden was visible through sliding-glass doors.

We ate ham and roast-beef sandwiches, and drank Molson Ice beers. Henderson bit into a sandwich and chewed thoughtfully. Then he said, "Often, you get a worried look on your face, with the first signs of rash. We speak of the 'worried face' of smallpox. That face is a diagnostic sign. The rash comes up all at once. It's more dense on the face and the extremities. That's how you can tell smallpox from chicken pox. With chicken pox, the rash crops up over a period of days, and it's more dense on the chest and trunk of the body. Smallpox pustules have a dimple, a dent in the center. Doctors say that the pustules have a 'shotty' feel, like shotgun pellets. You can roll them between your fingertips under the skin."

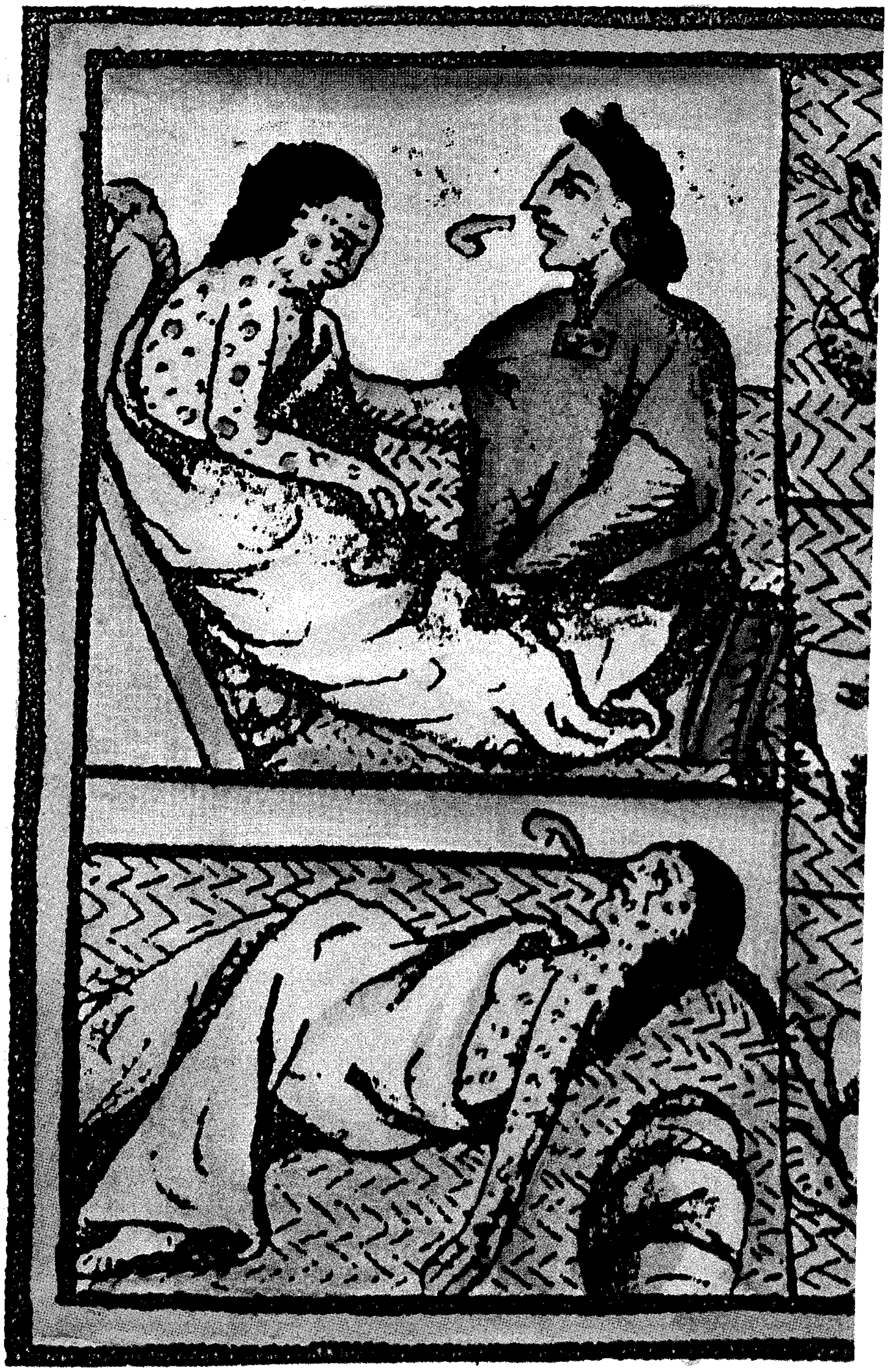
"How many doctors could recognize smallpox today?" I asked.

"Virtually none. Smallpox takes forms that even I can't diagnose. And I wrote the textbook." He is a co-author of "Smallpox and Its Eradication," a large book in red covers, which experts call the Big Red

Book of Smallpox. It was supposed to be the final word on smallpox—the tombstone of the virus.

On February 15, 1972, a thirty-eight-year-old Muslim clergyman returned to his home town of Damnjane, in Kosovo, Yugoslavia, after he'd been on a pilgrimage to Mecca, stopping at holy sites in Iraq. I will call him the Pilgrim. A photograph of the Pilgrim shows a man who looks well educated, has an intelligent face, and is wearing a clipped mustache and a beret. He had travelled by bus for his entire journey. The morning after his return home, he woke up feeling achy. At first, he thought he was tired from the long bus ride, but then he realized that he had caught a bug. He shivered for a day or two, and developed a red rash brought on by his fever, but quickly recovered. He had been vaccinated for smallpox two months earlier. Indeed, the Yugoslav medical authorities had been vaccinating the population of Yugoslavia relentlessly for more than fifty years, and the country was considered to be thoroughly immunized. The last case of smallpox in Yugoslavia had occurred in 1930.

The Pilgrim's family members and friends came to visit him. They wanted to hear about his trip, and he enjoyed telling them about it. Meanwhile, variola particles were leaking out of raw spots in the back of his throat and mixing with his saliva. When he spoke, tiny droplets of saliva, too small to be seen, drifted around him in a droplet cloud. If the person is throwing off a lethal virus, the cloud becomes a hot zone that can extend ten feet in all directions. Although the raw spots in the Pilgrim's throat amounted to a tiny surface of virus emission, smaller than a postage stamp, in a biological sense it was as hot as the surface of the sun, and it put enough smallpox into the air to paralyze Yugoslavia.

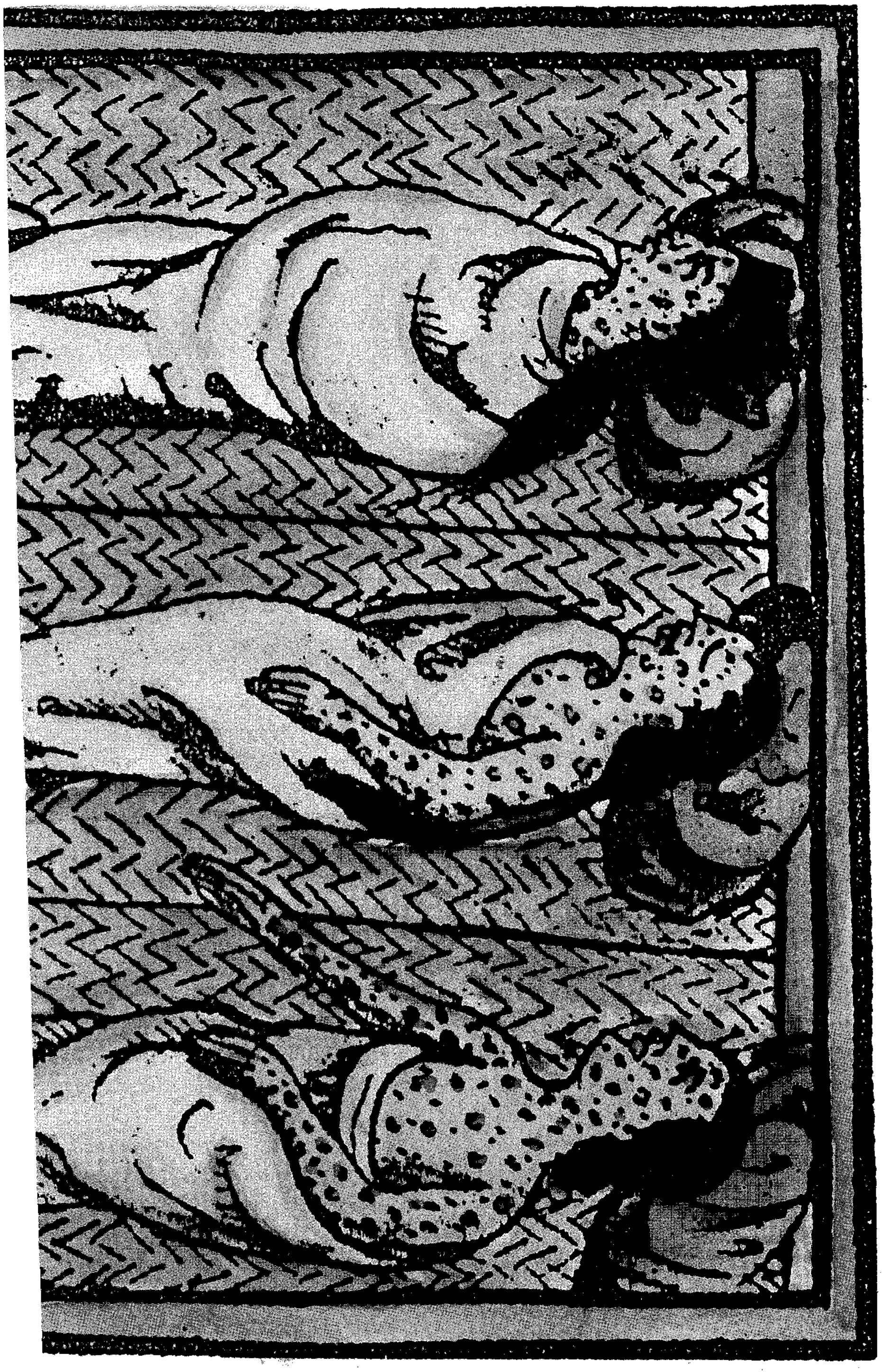


Humans have been dying of smallpox since ancient times. It killed three hundred mi

Variola particles are built to survive in the air. They are rounded-off rectangles that have a knobby, patterned surface—a gnarly hand-grenade look. Some experts call the particles bricks. The whole brick is made of a hundred different proteins, assembled and interlocked in a three-dimensional puzzle, which nobody has ever figured out. Virus experts feel that the structure of a smallpox particle is almost breathtakingly beautiful and deeply mathematical—one of the unexplored wonders of the viral universe. The structure protects the virus's genetic material: a long strand of DNA coiled in the center of the brick.

Pox bricks are the largest viruses. If a smallpox brick were the size of a real brick, then a cold-virus particle would be a blueberry sitting on the brick. But smallpox particles are still extremely small; about three million smallpox bricks laid down in rows would pave the period at the end of this sentence. A smallpox victim emits several bricks in each invisible droplet of saliva that spews into the air when the person speaks or coughs. When an airborne smallpox particle lands on a mucus membrane in someone's throat or lung, it sticks. It enters a cell and begins to make copies of itself. For one to three weeks, the virus spreads from cell to cell, amplifying silently in the body. No one has discovered exactly where the virus hides during its incubation phase. Probably it gets into the lymph cells, confusing the immune system, and victims are said to experience terrible dreams.

On February 21st, when the Pilgrim had been feeling achy for almost a week



century, when most people were immune to the disease. Today, they no longer are.

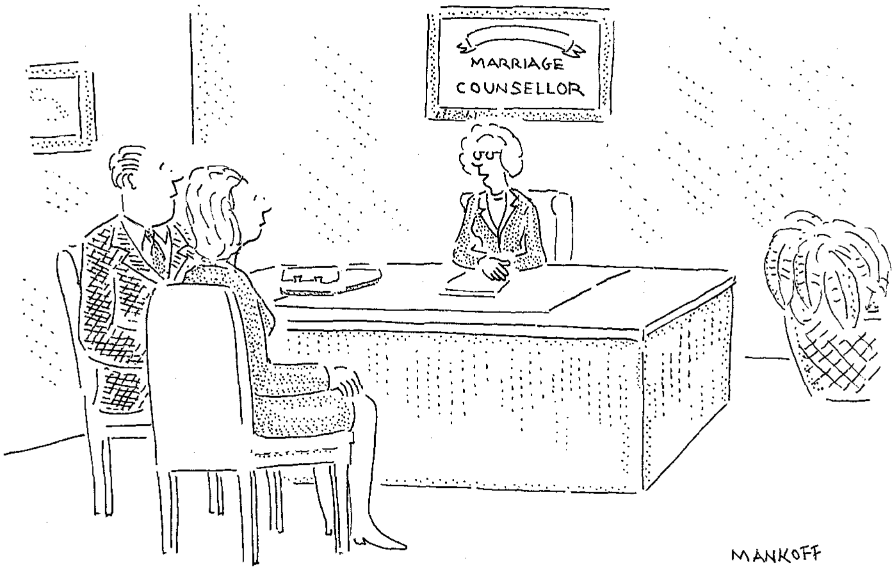
ı thirty-year-old man, a schoolteacher, vho is known to experts as Ljatif M., arived in Djakovica, a few miles from the 'ilgrim's town, to enroll in the Higher nstitute of Education. Doctors who ater investigated the schoolteacher's case ıever found out how he had come in ontact with the Pilgrim. One of them ıust have ended up in the other's town. 'ossibly they stood next to each other in shop—something like that.

On March 3rd, Ljatif developed a ver. Two days later, he went to a local medical center, where doctors gave him penicillin for his fever. Antibiotics have no effect on a virus. Then his skin broke with dark spots, and he may have developed a worried face. He felt worse, and a few days later his brother took him by bus to a hospital in the town of Cacak, about a hundred miles away. The dark spots were by this time merging into blackened, mottled splashes, which the doctors in Cacak didn't recognize. Ljatif became sicker. Finally, he was transferred by ambulance to Belgrade, where he was admitted to the Dermatology and Venereal Diseases Department of the city's main hospital. By then, his skin may have turned almost black in patches. We don't have access to his clinical reports, so I am describing a generalized extreme smallpox of the kind Ljatif had.

Inside the cells of the host, smallpox bricks pile up as if they were coming off a production line. Some of the particles develop tails. The tails are pieces of the cell's protein, which the virus steals from the cell for its own use. The tailed smallpox particles look like comets or spermatozoa. They begin to twist and wriggle, and they corkscrew through the cell, propelled by their tails toward the cell's outer membrane. You can see them with a microscope, thrashing with the same furious drive as sperm. They bump up against the inside of the cell membrane, and their heads make lumps, and the cell horripilates. Then something wonderful happens. Finger tubes begin to extend from the cell. The tubes grow longer. The cell turns into a Koosh ball. Inside each finger tube is a smallpox comet. The fingers lengthen until they touch and join nearby cells, and the smallpox comets squirm through the finger tubes into the next cell. The comets are protected from attack by the immune system, because they stay inside the finger tubes, where antibodies and killer white blood cells can't reach them. Then the Koosh ball explodes. Out pour heaps of bricks that don't have tails. These smallpox particles are wrapped in a special armor, like hand grenades. They float away, still protected by their armor, and they stick to other cells and go inside them, and those cells turn into Koosh balls. Each infected cell releases up to a hundred thousand virus particles, and they are added to the quadrillions of particles replicating in the universe of the ruined host.

Ljatif's skin had become blackened, mottled, and silky to the touch, and sheets of small blood blisters may have peppered his face. In a case of black pox, variola shocks the immune system so that it can't produce pus. Small blood vessels were leaking and breaking in his skin, and blood was seeping under the surface. His skin had developed large areas of continuous bruises.

On March 9th, the Belgrade doctors showed Ljatif to students and staff as a case that demonstrated an unusual reaction to penicillin. (In fact, a very bad reaction to penicillin can look like this.) Ljatif's eyes may have turned dark red. In hemorrhagic smallpox, one or two



"Look, there is no right and wrong here, but I'm going to side with Helen because I'm a girl."

• •

large hemorrhages appear in each eye, in the white encircling the iris, making the eyes look as if they could sag or leak blood. The eyes never do leak, but the blood in the eyes darkens, until the whites can sometimes seem almost black.

During the day of March 10th, Ljatif suffered catastrophic hemorrhages into the intestines. His intestines filled up with blood, and he expelled quarts of it, staining the sheets black, and he developed grave anemia from blood loss. For some unknown reason, black-pox patients remain conscious, in a kind of paralyzed shock, and they seem acutely aware of what is happening nearly up to the point of death—"a peculiar state of apprehension and mental alertness that were said to be unlike the manifestations of any other infectious disease," in the words of the Big Red Book of Smallpox. We can imagine that Ljatif was extremely frightened and witnessed his hemorrhages with a sense that his insides were coming apart. During the final phase of a smallpox intestinal bleedout, the lining of the intestines or the rectum can slip off. The lining is expelled through the anus, coming out in pieces or in lengths of tube. This bloody tissue is known as a tubular cast. When a smallpox patient throws a tubular cast, death is imminent. All we know about Ljatif is that his bleeds were unstoppable, that he was rushed to the Surgical Clinic of the Belgrade hospital, and that he died in the evening. The duty physician listed the cause of death as a bad reaction to penicillin.

"These hemorrhagic smallpox cases put an incredible amount of virus into the air," D. A. Henderson said. Some of the doctors and nurses who treated Ljatif were doomed. Indeed, Ljatif had seeded smallpox across Yugoslavia. Investigators later found that while he was in the hospital in Cacak he infected eight other patients and a nurse. The nurse died. One of the patients was a schoolboy, and he was sent home, where he broke with smallpox and infected his mother, and she died. In the Belgrade hospital, Ljatif infected twenty-seven more people, including seven nurses and doctors. Those victims infected five more people. Ljatif directly infected a total of thirty-eight people. They caught the virus by breathing the air near him. Eight of them died.

Meanwhile, the Pilgrim's smallpox travelled in waves through Yugoslavia. A rising tide of smallpox typically comes in fourteen-day waves—a wave of cases, a lull down to zero, and then a much bigger wave, another lull down to zero, then a huge and terrifying wave. The waves reflect the incubation periods, or generations, of the virus. Each wave or generation is anywhere from ten to twenty times as large as the last, so the virus grows exponentially and explosively, gathering strength like some kind of biological tsunami. This is because each infected person infects an average of ten to twenty more people. By the end of March, 1972, more than a hundred and fifty cases had occurred.

The Pilgrim had long since recovered. He didn't even know that he had started the outbreak. By then, however, Yugoslav doctors knew that they were dealing with smallpox, and they sent an urgent cable to the World Health Organization, asking for help.

Luckily, Yugoslavia had an authoritarian Communist government, under Josip Broz Tito, and he exercised full emergency powers. His government mobilized the Army and imposed strong measures to stop people from travelling and spreading the virus. Villages were closed by the Army, roadblocks were thrown up, public meetings were prohibited, and hotels and apartment buildings were made into quarantine wards to hold people who had had contact with smallpox cases. Ten thousand people were locked up in these buildings by the Yugoslav military. The daily life of the country came to a shocked halt. At the same time, all the countries surrounding Yugoslavia closed their borders with it, to prevent any travellers from coming out. Yugoslavia was cut off from the world. There were twenty-five foci of smallpox in the country. The virus had leapfrogged from town to town, even though the population had been heavily vaccinated. The Yugoslav authorities, helped by the W.H.O., began a massive campaign to revaccinate every person in Yugoslavia against smallpox; the population was twenty-one million. "They gave eighteen million doses in ten days," D. A. Henderson said. A person's immunity begins to grow immediately after the vaccination; it takes full effect within a week.

At the beginning of April, Henderson flew to Belgrade, where he found government officials in a state of deep alarm. The officials expected to see thousands of blistered, dying, contagious people streaming into hospitals any day. Henderson sat down with the Minister of Health and examined the statistics. He plotted the cases on a time line, and now he could see the generations of smallpox—one, two, three waves, each far larger than the previous one. Henderson had seen such waves appear many times before as smallpox rippled and amplified through human populations. Reading the viral surf with a practiced eye, he could see the start of the fourth wave. It was not climbing as steeply as he had expected. This meant that the waves had peaked. The outbreak was declining. Be cause of the military roadblocks, people weren't travelling, and the government was vaccinating everyone as fast as possible. "The outbreak is near an end," he declared to the Minister of Health. "I don't think you'll have more than ten additional cases." There were about a dozen: Henderson was right—the fourth wave never really materialized. The outbreak had been started by one man with the shivers. It was ended by a military crackdown and vaccination for every citizen.

At the present time, the United States' national stockpile of smallpox vaccine is a collection of four cardboard boxes that sit on a single pallet behind a chain-link fence inside a walk-in freezer in a warehouse in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, near the Susquehanna River, at a facility owned by Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories. The vaccine is slowly deteriorating. The Food and Drug Administration has put a hold on the smallpox vaccine, and right now no one can use it—not even emergency personnel or key government leaders.

The vaccine is owned by the federal government and is managed by Wyeth-Ayerst, which is the company that made it, twenty-five to thirty years ago. It is stored in glass vials. The vials contain freeze-dried nuggets of live vaccinia virus. Vaccinia is a mild virus. When you are infected with it by vaccination, it causes a pustule to appear, and afterward you are immune to smallpox for some years. People who have been vaccinated have a circular scar the size of a nickel on their upper arm, left by the vaccinia-virus pustule they had in childhood after vaccination. Some adults can remember how much the pustule hurt.

People from Wyeth periodically open the boxes and send some of the vials out for testing, to see how the vaccine is doing. The vials once held fifteen million good doses, but now moisture has invaded some of them. The nuggets are normally dry and white in color, but when moisture invades they turn brown and ook sticky, and the vaccine may be weakened. The vaccine was made by a traditional method: the manufacturer had a arm where calves were raised. The calves' bellies were scratched with vaccinia virus, nd their bellies developed pustules. Then he calves were killed and hung up on ooks, the blood was drained out of hem, and the pustules were scraped with knife. The resulting pus was freeze-dried. The vaccine is dried calf pus. According to one virologist who examined it under a microscope, "It looks like nose snot. It's all hair and wads of crap." It was a good vaccine for its time, but the F.D.A. would never clear it for general use today except in a national emergency. Furthermore, some people have bad or fatal reactions to the vaccine. There is an antidote, but the supplies of it have turned strangely pink, and the F.D.A. has put a hold on the use of these supplies, too.

D. A. Henderson believes that in practice doctors could obtain about seven million doses of vaccine from the vials. Unaccountably, most of the vaccine has not recently been tested for potency, so it has not been absolutely proved to work. The experts believe that it would work, but there still isn't enough.

Henderson explained the problem this way: "If there's a bioterror event, and someone releases enough smallpox to create a hundred cases—let's say in the Baltimore area—it would be a national emergency. The demand for vaccine would be beyond all belief." In Yugoslavia in 1972, the outbreak was started by one man, and eighteen million doses of vaccine were needed—one for almost every person in the country.

"That first wave after the bioterror event could be a hundred people with smallpox," Henderson said. "It takes two weeks after exposure before doctors can diagnose smallpox. Meanwhile, those hundred people will give smallpox to a thousand or two thousand people. That's the second wave. Some of those first hundred people will go to other cities—to Washington, to New York, all over. So the second wave will include cases in other American cities, and probably in foreign countries. By then, it'll be too late to treat them, and we'll lose the second wave. We'll be well into the third wave—ten to twenty thousand people with smallpox—before we can really start vaccinating people. By then, we'll begin to pick up so many cases in the Baltimore area that we won't be able to track cases, and we'll just have to vaccinate everybody around Baltimore. A lot of people in Baltimore work in Washington. And so you're going to have a whole lot of people in Washington with smallpox. You can see the deal. Immediately, you would have to vaccinate Washington." Hen-

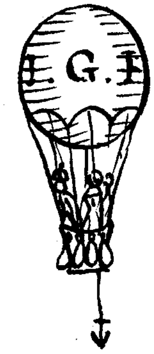
EXERCISED MY STOCK OPTIONS BUT AM UNABLE TO ACCESS MY WEALTH FOR ANOTHER 6 MONTHS

derson thinks that a hundred million doses of vaccine would be needed in the United States alone to stop a surging outbreak triggered by a hundred initial cases of smallpox from a bioterror event. That much vaccine could be stored in the space occupied by a one-car garage.

Raindrops splattered on a wooden deck in Henderson's garden, and the room grew dark, until it was a pool of shadows full of African masks. Henderson's voice came out of the gloom. He didn't bother to get up and turn on the lights. He said, "The way air travel is now, about six weeks would be enough time to seed cases around the world. Dropping an atomic bomb could cause casualties in a specific area, but dropping smallpox could engulf the world."

Henderson passionately wants to get rid of the virus. "What we need to do is create a general moral climate where smallpox is considered too morally reprehensible to be used as a weapon. That would make the possession of smallpox in a laboratory, anywhere, effectively a crime against humanity. The likelihood that it would be used as a weapon is diminished by a global commitment to destroy it. How much it is diminished I don't know. But it adds a level of safety."

IN the late seventeen-hundreds, the English country doctor Edward Jenner noticed that dairymaids who had contracted cowpox from cows seemed to be protected from catching smallpox, and he thought he would do an experiment. Cowpox (it probably lives in rodents, and only occasionally infects cows) produced a mild disease. On May 14, 1796, Jenner scratched the arm of a boy named James Phipps, introducing into the boy's arm a droplet of cowpox pus that he'd taken from a blister on the hand of a dairy worker named Sarah Nelmes. A few months later, he scratched the boy's arm with deadly pus he had taken from a smallpox patient, and the boy didn't come down with smallpox. The boy had become immune. Jenner had discovered what he called vaccination, after the Latin word for cow. He saw the road to eradication clearly. In 1801, he wrote, "It now becomes too manifest to admit of controversy, that the annihilation of the Small Pox, the most dreadful scourge of the human species, must be the final result of this practice."



A Soviet epidemiologist, Viktor Zhdanov, deserves credit for kick-starting the modern effort. At the 1958 annual meeting of the World Health Assembly, in Minneapolis, he called for the global eradication of smallpox. He spoke passionately and logically, but the scientific community was skeptical. Many biologists held a common view that it was impossible to separate a wild microorganism from the ecological web it lived in. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson endorsed the idea of smallpox eradication. It was a political move to help improve American-Soviet relations. D. A. Henderson was then the head of disease surveillance at the C.D.C. He was given an order to report to Geneva to head the W.H.O.'s new Smallpox Eradication Unit. He didn't want the job, but he was told that if he didn't take it he would have to resign from government service. He went to Geneva, where he formed a hand-picked team. "The World Health Assembly proposed a ten-year program, because Kennedy had said we could land a man on the moon in ten years," he recalled.

The team set a goal of vaccinating eighty per cent of the population of countries that harbored smallpox. Henderson says that from the beginning they had another idea as well, and it proved to be the key. The idea was to track smallpox outbreaks and vaccinate people in a ring around any outbreak. This is known as surveillance and ring vaccination. In order to throw a ring around smallpox, they had to know where the demon was moving at all times, and they started showing villagers photographs of a baby with smallpox, so that the villagers could recognize and report cases to the authorities.

Henderson's team needed a way of vaccinating people fast. They tried a machine called the Ped-o-Jet, which was operated by foot pedal. It could shoot jets of vaccine into the arms of thousands of people in a day, but it broke down. Then they tried a needle with two points. It was known as the bifurcated needle, and it looked like a tiny two-pronged fork. The points of the fork held a droplet of vaccine, and the needle was to be jabbed repeatedly into a person's arm. It could be used by a volunteer who had no medical training.

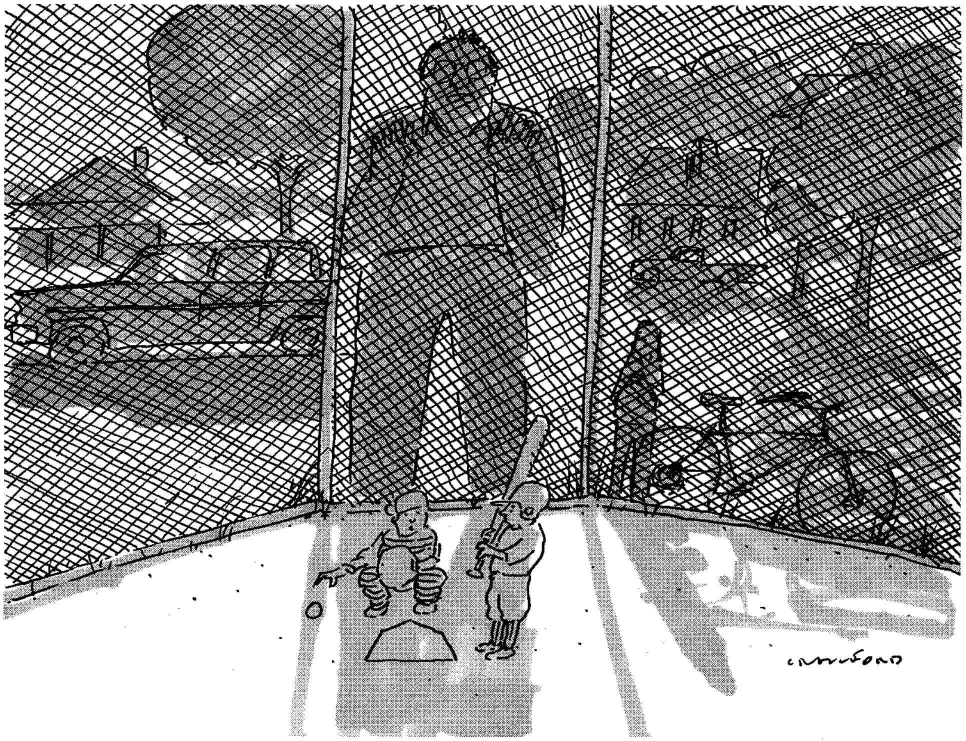
They discovered that the virus rose and fell in seasonal waves, like flu. This led to an idea to attack the virus with a ring assault when it was at its ebb. The virus was a wild organism that lived only in humans. It needed to find and invade a susceptible human every fourteen days or it would die. If each outbreak of the virus could be surrounded by a ring of immune people during the virus's low season, the virus would not be able to complete its fourteen-day life cycle. It would be cut off, unable to move to the next human host, and its chain of infection would be broken.

The ring had to be tight. If it developed a leak, smallpox would blow out. In January, 1975, smallpox blew out in Bangladesh, after the eradicators thought they were on the verge of stopping it everywhere in Asia. *Variola major* swept through more than five hundred towns and villages. Henderson began shuttling between Geneva and Bangladesh, and in April of that year, when things were still not under control, he visited the Infectious Disease Hospital in Dacca, the nation's capital. He wanted to do rounds in a smallpox ward. "I went down the rows of beds," he told me. There were seventy or eighty people, and half of them were dying. "There is nothing you can do for any of these patients. They were afraid to move. There were a lot of flies crawling all over the place. My God, they talk about the odor of smallpox. It *is* an odd smell, not like anything else."

The skin gives off gases. "It's a sickly odor, like rotting flesh, but it's not decay, because the skin remains sealed and the pus isn't leaking out," Henderson said. "That smell is one of the mysteries of smallpox. No one knows what it is. I was with this British guy, Nick Ward, M.D. He had worked in Africa—he was a tough guy. At the end, he stood by a fence looking at the ground. Finally, he said to me, 'I don't know that I could go through another situation like that again.' "

Nicholas Ward, who now lives in France, remembered that moment. "I've spent a fair amount of my life working with tropical diseases, and I can truly say there is nothing so awful as a case of smallpox, particularly the type where a person becomes a bloody mess," he said. He knew the odor. "I would have a shrewd idea of a diagnosis after walking into a home. I could smell it."

Henderson and his team mounted ring vaccinations across Bangladesh, and they traced cases and contacts, trying to surround the life form. Finally, in the fall of 1975, they cornered variola on an island off the coast of Bangladesh. It was a marshy, poor place called Bhola Island, and there, on October 16th, a three-year-old girl named Rahima Banu broke with the last case of naturally occurring *Variola major* anywhere on earth. She survived. Rahima Banu would be twenty-seven years old today; researchers have lost track of her. Doctors from the Smallpox Eradication Unit collected six of the girl's pustules after they had dried into scabs, peeling them off her skin gently, with tweezers. Two years later, on October 26, 1977, the last natural case of the mild type of smallpox, *Variola minor*, popped up in a cook in Somalia named Ali Maow Maalin. He survived, and the last ring tightened around variola, and its life cycle stopped.



"Don't sweat it. That's Little League—your dad comes, you choke."

• •

THE headquarters of the Centers for Disease Control, in Atlanta, is a jumble of old and new buildings, joined by elevated walkways, which give the place the feel of a maze. The buildings sit along Clifton Road, an artery that winds through green neighborhoods in the northeastern part of Atlanta. I arrived at the C.D.C. on a perfect day in spring. Changeable clouds marched across a deep sky, and oak trees were shedding green flowers. Across the street from the entrance, a blue jay screamed in a pine tree, and the branches glittered in the sun, throwing off a scent of pitch.

Joseph J. Esposito, Ph.D., who is the chief of the C.D.C.'s Poxvirus Section, led me along an outdoor walkway toward his laboratory and office. Esposito is a stocky man of moderate height, in his mid-fifties, who runs to keep his weight down, and he has a dark beard and wears eyeglasses over brown eyes that are perceptive and serious. I asked him if we could get closer to smallpox. We passed along an aerial walkway covered with a chain-link fence, and we turned onto another walkway. We stopped and leaned on a railing. We were facing the C.D.C.'s Level 4 biocontainment building. It contains the Level 4 hot suites—labs where researchers work with ethal viruses while wearing pressurized spacesuits. The building has a line of windows tinted blue-green, like fish tanks.

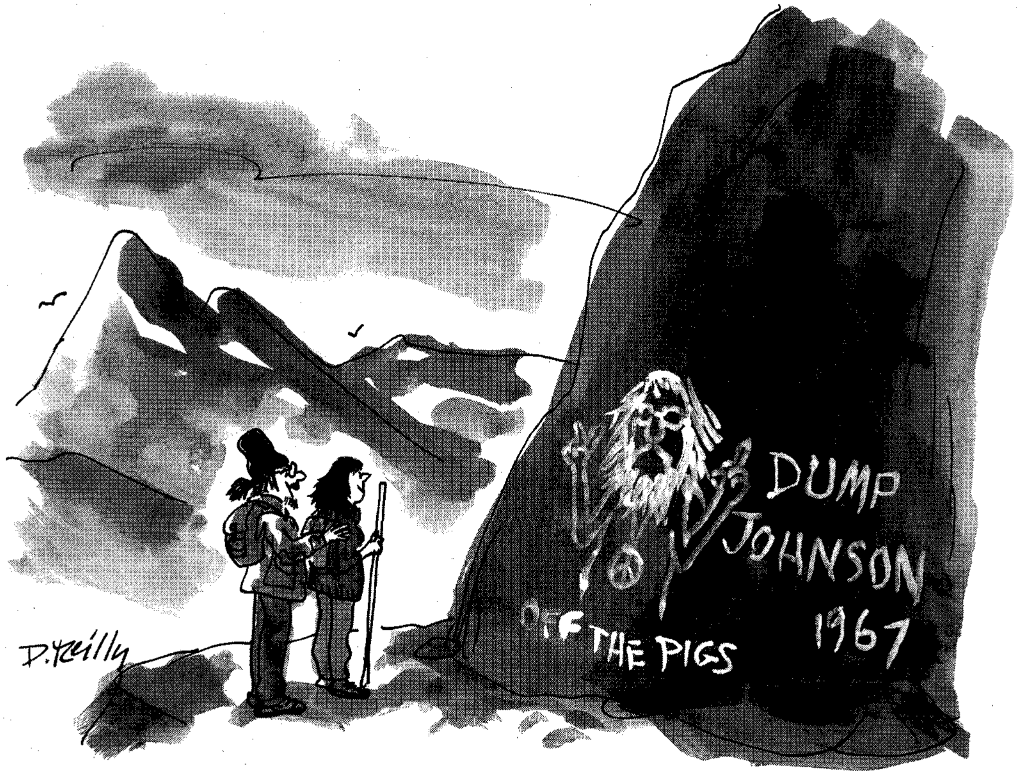
"The variola is in there somewhere," Joe Esposito said, offering me a grave smile and nodding at the Level 4 building. "There is a kind of electricity in the air when we're working with smallpox. Everybody around here always seems to know—'Joe's got the smallpox out of the freezer.'"

The smallpox freezer may be encircled by alarms and motion detectors. It may or may not be wrapped in chains. It may be a stainless-steel cylinder. Or it may be a white box intended to look like any other freezer. Officials at the C.D.C. won't comment.

Inside the freezer, the entire collection of smallpox occupies a volume slightly larger than that of a basketball. It consists of approximately four hundred little plastic vials the size of pencil stubs, the residue of D. A. Henderson's war with variola. They're an inch long and they have plastic screw caps. They sit in seven little white cardboard boxes, in a rack inside the freezer, which keeps the virus not strictly alive, not exactly dead, but potent. Most of the vials contain milky ice or bloody ice. The virus has been cultured in flasks of live cells (milky ice) or in live chicken eggs (live eggs have a blood system). Around twenty-five of the vials contain human scabs—dried smallpox pustules. The scabs look like pencil erasers.

The six scabs that were collected from the girl in Bangladesh named Rahima Banu used to sit in a vial, but recently Esposito's group used the last of her scabs for research. The strain that came out of her scabs is known as Bangladesh 1975—or, informally, as the Rahima. Now that the scabs are gone, the Rahima exists in vials of milky ice.

Esposito sat hunched in his chair in front of his computer. His office is a windowless room with cinder-block walls. A troll with Shocking-pink hair stood on top of the computer, staring at him wide-eyed. "I like to think like a virus," Esposito said. "If you can think like a virus, then you can begin to understand why a virus does what it does. A smallpox particle gets into a person's body and, in a way, it's thinking, I'm this one particle sitting here surrounded by an angry immune system. I have to multiply fast. Then I have to get out of this host fast. It escapes into the air before the pustules develop." By the time the host feels sick, the virus has already moved on to its next host. The previous host has become a cast-off husk (and is now becoming saturated with virus), but whether the person lives or dies no longer matters to the virus. However, the dried scabs, when



"Just where Dad said it would be."

they fall off, contain live virus. The scabs are the virus's seeds. They preserve it for a long time, just in case it hasn't managed to reach a host in the air. The scabs give the virus a second chance.

* * *

POXVIRUSES move easily through the animal kingdom. Along with herds of animals or swarms of insects come poxviruses circulating among them like pickpockets at a fair. Esposito once classified what he and other virologists have glimpsed of the poxviruses in nature. He noted monkeypox, swinepox, buffalopox, skunkpox, raccoonpox, gerbilpox, a few deerpoxes, a sealpox, turkeypox, canarypox, pigeonpox, starlingpox, peacockpox, dolphinpox, Nile crocodilepox, penguinpox, two kangaroopoxes, and a quokkapox. (The quokka is an Australian wallaby.) Any attempt to get to the bottom of the butterflypoxes, mothpoxes, and beetlepoxes would be something like enumerating the nine billion names of God.

A caterpillar that has caught an insectpox dissolves into a liquefaction of insect guts mixed with pure crystals of poxvirus. This is known as a virus melt. The melt pours out of the dead caterpillar, and other caterpillars come along and accidentally eat the crystals lying on a leaf, and *they* melt, and so it goes for millions of years in the happy life of an insectpox. "It is a good thing no person has been known to catch an insectpox," Esposito remarked. (You might avoid eating melted caterpillars.) The yellow-fever mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*, suffers from a fatal mosquitopox. At least two midgepoxes torment midges. Grasshoppers are known to get at least six poxes. If a grasshopperpox breaks out in a swarm of African locusts, it can wipe them out with a plague.

Viruses have an ability to move from one type of host to another in what is known as a trans-species jump. The virus changes during the course of a jump, adapting to its new host. The trans-species jump is the virus's most important means of long-term survival. Species go extinct; viruses move on. There is something impressive in the trans-species jump of a virus, like an unfurling of wings or a flash of stripes when a predator makes a rush. Some fifty years ago, in central Africa, the AIDS virus apparently moved out of chimpanzees into people. Chimpanzees are now endangered, while the AIDS virus is booming.

For most of human prehistory, people lived in small groups of hunter-gatherers. The poxviruses did not deign to notice *Homo sapiens* as long as the species consisted of scattered groups; there was no percentage in it for a pox. With the growth of agriculture, the human population of the earth swelled and became more tightly packed. Villages became towns and cities, and people were crowded together in river valleys.

Epidemiologists have done some mathematics on the spread of smallpox, and they find that the virus needs a population of about two hundred thousand people living within a fourteen-day travel time from one another or the virus can't keep its life cycle going, and it dies out. Those conditions didn't occur in history until the appearance of settled agricultural areas and cities. At that point—roughly seven thousand years ago—the human species became an accident with a poxvirus waiting to happen.

Smallpox could be described as the first urban virus. It is thought to have made a trans-species jump into humans in one of the early agricultural river valleys—perhaps in the Nile Valley, or in Mesopotamia, or in the Indus River Valley. In the Cairo Museum, the mummy of the Pharaoh Ramses V, who died as a young man in 1157 B.C., is speckled with yellow blisters from face to scrotum.

In 1991, Joe Esposito and the molecular biologist Craig Venter, who was at the National Institutes of Health, sequenced the entire genome of the Rahima strain of smallpox; that is, they mapped all its DNA. They found that the virus contains a hundred and eighty-six thousand base pairs of DNA (each base pair being a step on the ladder of the molecule), and that the DNA contains about a hundred and eighty-seven genes—making smallpox one of the most complicated viruses known. (The AIDS virus has only ten genes.) A gene is a piece of DNA, which contains the recipe for making one protein. Esposito's team noticed that smallpox has a gene that is also found in the placenta of a mouse. Smallpox knows how to make a mouse protein. How did smallpox lear that? "The poxviruses are promiscuous a capturing genes from their hosts," Espo sito said. "It tells you that smallpox was once inside a mouse or some other small rodent." D. A. Henderson speculates that the original host of smallpox may have been an African rodent that lived in a crescent of green forests along the southern Nile River. The forests disappeared, cut down by people, and possibly the rodent has gone extinct. This is only a guess. Smallpox moved on.

THE principal American biodefense laboratory is the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, or USAMRIID, in Fort Detrick, Maryland—an Army base that nestles against the eastern front of the Appalachian Mountains in the city of Frederick, an hour's drive northwest of Washington. There is no smallpox at USAMRIID, for only the two W.H.O. repositories are allowed to have it. The principal scientific adviser at USAMRIID is Peter Jahrling, a civilian in his fifties with gray-blond hair, PhotoGray glasses, and a craggy face. Jahrling was the primary scientist during the 1989 outbreak of Ebola virus in Reston, Virginia: he discovered and named the Ebola-Reston virus.

"I don't think there is any higher biological threat to this nation than smallpox," Jahrling said to me, in his office, a windowless retreat jammed with paper. His voice was croaking. "I was over in Geneva for a meeting on smallpox, and I came back with some flu strain," he said hoarsely. The flu strain had swept through the world's smallpox experts. "Shows how fast a virus can move. If we have some kind of bioterror emergency with smallpox, there will be no time to start stroking our beards. We'd better have vaccine pre-positioned on pallets and ready to go."

Jahrling opposes the destruction of the official stocks of smallpox. "If you really believe there's a bioterrorist threat out there, then you can't get rid of smallpox," he said. "If smallpox is outlawed, only outlaws will have smallpox." His group has been testing antiviral drugs that might work on smallpox, and he feels that in order to verify the effectiveness of a new drug it would be necessary to test it on live smallpox virus.

One of Jahrling's researchers, John Huggins, led me into the central areas of USAMRIID. Huggins is a chunky man with round Fiorucci eyeglasses. He turned into a corridor leading to the Level 4 spacesuit hot suites, or hot zones. The walls were cinder block, and the light turned bile green. A smoky reek drifted in the corridors, coming from huge autoclaves—pressure cookers—where contaminated equipment and waste were being heated and sterilized after being brought out of a hot zone. We stopped at a door that had a window of thick glass, looking into hot suite AA5, the Ebola hot zone.

I pressed my nose against the glass. It was cool, and there was a faint rumble of blowers, keeping the zone at negative pressure, so that no contaminated air would flow out through cracks. The suite was dark and drowned in shadows, illuminated only by light coming from lab equipment. I could see no one in there but white mice in racks of plastic boxes. They were scribble-scrabbling in pine shavings.

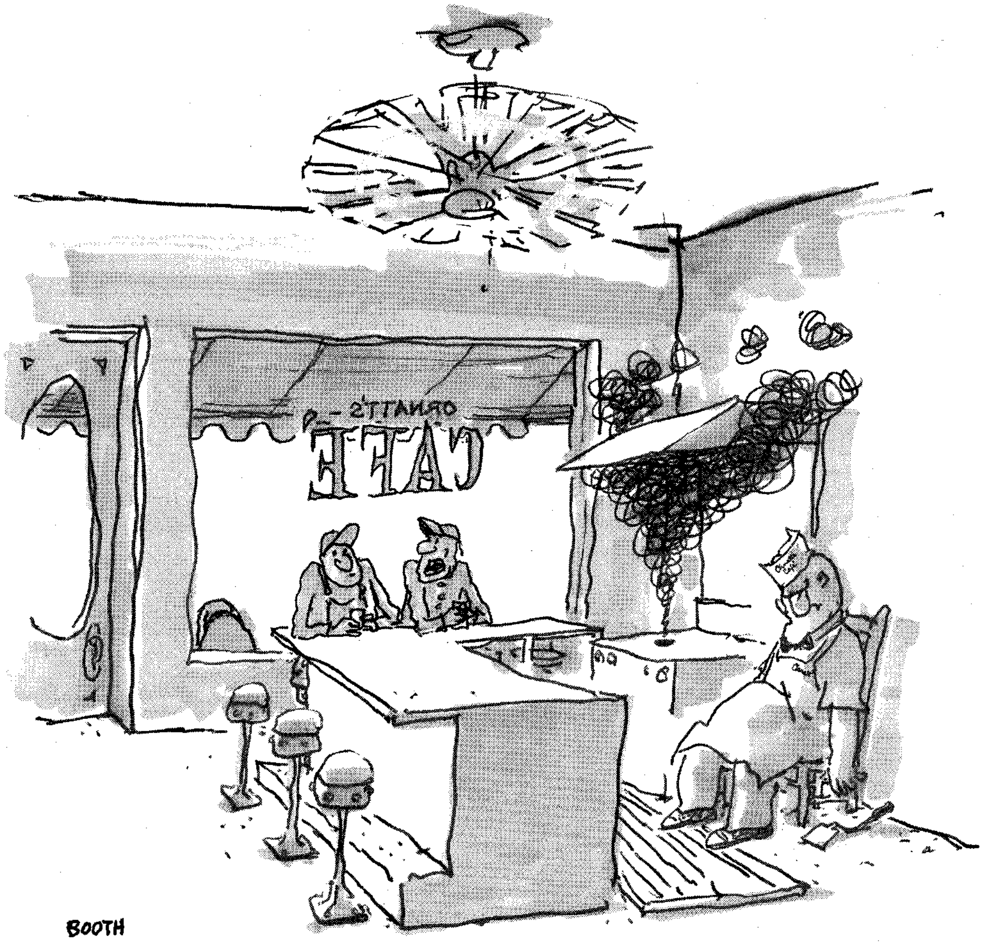
"These mice are all infected with Ebola," Huggins said. "They bleed when they die. Like humans."

The mice looked fine. I couldn't see any blood in the shavings.

"We're giving them an antiviral drug that saves their lives," Huggins explained. "They're kind of perky. It's called an S.A.H. drug. It's not ready for human testing. It could work in humans, but we don't know."

In 1995, Huggins spent time in a spacesuit at the C.D.C. Level 4 lab in Atlanta, testing drugs on live smallpox. He found that a drug called cidofovir can block smallpox replication. Cidofovir, which is normally used against a virus that infects AIDS patients, has drawbacks. It must be given to people by I.V. drip, and there is some concern that it might damage the kidneys. Huggins and Jahrling believe that within five years better smallpox drugs are likely to be discovered. They say they will need to test the drugs directly on the virus. They add that the drug must be tested on the live virus in order to receive F.D.A. approval.

In March, a committee of the highly respected Institute of Medicine, in Wash-



"'Well done' lulled him into complacency."

ington, D.C., concluded that one of the main reasons for retaining live smallpox virus would be to help develop drugs against it. D. A. Henderson, who was not a member of the Institute of Medicine committee and thoroughly disagrees with its conclusions, thought that Jahrling was being too optimistic. "To get a new antiviral drug against smallpox is going to cost three hundred million dollars," he said. "The money simply isn't there."

Jahrling stood his ground. "Ceremonial destruction of smallpox is the crown jewel in D. A. Henderson's career," he said. "He would like to throw the lever on smallpox himself. If I had spent my life tramping the planet to eradicate the virus, I would want to throw the lever, too. What he did was a great accomplishment, but he has become blinded by the last glittering crown jewel of total eradication."

KEN ALIBEK, who was once Kanatjan Alibekov, a leading Soviet bioweaponeer and the inventor of the world's most powerful anthrax, shocked the American intelligence community when he defected, in 1992, and revealed how far the Soviet Union had gone with bioweapons. In a new book of his, entitled "Biohazard," Alibek says that there were twenty tons of liquid smallpox kept on hand at Soviet military bases; it was kept ready for loading on biowarheads on missiles targeted on American cities. I contacted certain government sources and asked them if there was any evidence to corroborate Alibek's claims.

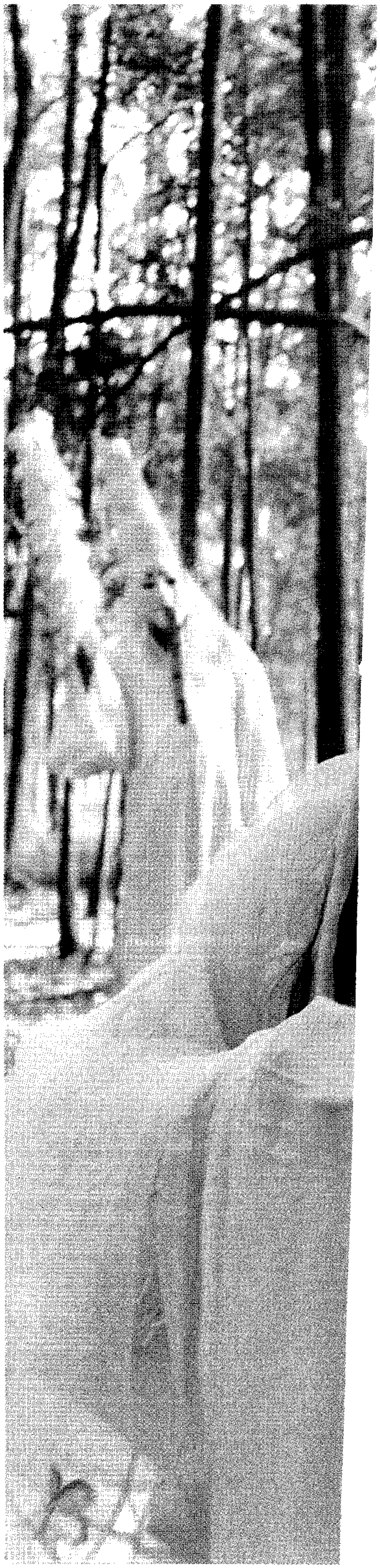
One person who asked not to be named said, "I really have to be careful what I say. Yeah, Alibek's claims have been corroborated in multiple ways. There's not a lot of evidence. There's some."

Another person who asked not to be named said that the Soviet Union had put the biowarheads on ICBM missiles and test launched them sometime before 1991 over the Pacific Ocean. The United States—probably using spy satellites that orbited near the tests—was able to monitor the missiles as they soared into space and then punched back through the atmosphere and landed in the sea. The warheads were spinning weirdly: they were unusually heavy, and they had a strange shape. The warhead was heavy because it had an active refrigeration system to keep its temperature near or below the boiling temperature of water during reëntry. Nuclear warheads don't need to be actively cooled. Why would a warhead need to be cooled? Presumably, because it was designed to contain something alive. But what? The person said, "The warhead was built to carry a very small quantity of biological weapon. Anthrax wouldn't have worked too well, because you need to put a lot of anthrax in the air to kill people, and anthrax isn't contagious. With smallpox, you don't need much. If you use smallpox, you get around the most difficult technical problem of bioweapons—the problem of dissemination. With smallpox, you use people as disseminators."

In 1989, a Soviet biologist named Vladimir Pasechnik defected to Britain. British intelligence agents spent a year debriefing him in a safe house. By the end, the British agents felt they had confirmed that the U.S.S.R. had biological missiles aimed at the United States. This information reached President George Bush and the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Mrs. Thatcher then apparently telephoned the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, and sternly confronted him. She was furious, and so was Bush. Gorbachev responded by allowing a small, secret team of American and British biological-weapons inspectors to tour Soviet

PEONIES, UNCUT

It's big (a hundred and sixty-plus characters, fifty-five scenes), it's bad (Chinese officials labelled it "feudal, superstitious, and pornographic"), and it's beautiful (with a lush Chinese garden replete with songbirds and a fishpond, and five hundred and fifty hand-embroidered silk costumes). And, finally, after being forbidden last year by the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Culture to travel to the United States, it's coming to a theatre near you. Beginning this week, Lincoln Center Festival is presenting Chen Shi-Zheng's staging of the Ming-dynasty opera "The Peony Pavilion," Tang Xianzu's epic story of the ghost of a young woman who returns to earth to consummate her love for a man from a long-ago dream. For the first time in almost four centuries, the twenty-two-hour opera will be performed in its entirety.



Photograph by Josef Astor

biowarfare facilities. In January of 1991, the inspectors travelled across the U.S.S.R., getting whirlwind looks at some of the major clandestine bases of the Soviet biowarfare program, which was called Biopreparat. The inspectors were frightened by what they discovered. ("I would describe it as scary, and I feel a responsibility to tell the world medical community about what I saw, because doctors could face these diseases," an inspector, Frank Malinoski, M.D., Ph.D., said to me.) On January 14th, the team arrived at Vector, the main virology complex, in Siberia, and the next day, after being treated to vodka and piles of caviar, they were shown into a laboratory called Building 6, where one of the inspectors, David Kelly, took a technician aside and asked him what virus they had been working with. The technician said that they had been working with smallpox. Kelly repeated the question three times. Three times, he asked the technician, "You mean you were working with *Variola major*?" and he emphasized to the technician that his answer was very important. The technician responded emphatically that it was *Variola major*. Kelly says that his interpreter was the best Russian interpreter the British government has. "There was no ambiguity," Kelly says.

The inspectors were stunned. Vector was not supposed to have any smallpox at all, much less be working with it. All the Russian smallpox stocks were supposed to be kept in one freezer in Moscow, which was supposed to be under the control of the World Health Organization. For Vector to have smallpox would be a supreme violation of rules set down by the W.H.O.

Then they went upstairs into Building 6, and entered a long corridor. On one side was a line of glass windows looking in on a giant airtight steel chamber of a type known as a dynamic aerosol test chamber. The device is for testing bioweapons. Small explosives are detonated inside the chamber, throwing a biological agent into the air of the chamber. The chamber in Building 6 had an octopuslike structure of tubes coming out of it where sensors could be attached or monkeys could be clamped with their faces exposed to the chamber's air. An airborne bioweapon would get into the sensors or into the animals' lungs. On the other side of the corridor was a room that Frank Malinoski said "looked like a NASA control room," and video cameras provided views inside the chamber, so that Vector scientists could watch the release of a bioweapon.

Vector scientists later told the inspectors that the chamber was a Model UKZD-25—a bioweapons explosion-test chamber. It was the largest and most sophisticated modern bioweapons test chamber that has ever been found by inspectors in any country. It was used for testing smallpox.

The inspectors asked to put on spacesuits and to go inside. (They had brought along Q-Tip-like swab kits: they would have liked to swab the inner walls of the chamber, in the hope of collecting a virus.) The Russians refused. "They said our vaccines might not protect us," Malinoski says. "It suggested that they had developed viruses that were resistant to American vaccines." The Russians ordered the inspectors to leave Building 6.

At a large gathering that evening, three inspectors—David Kelly, Frank Malinoski, and Christopher Davis—publicly confronted the head of Vector, a virologist named Lev Sandakhchiev, about Vector's smallpox. (His name is pronounced "Sun-dock-chev.") He backpedalled angrily. Davis, a medical doctor with a Ph.D. who was then with British intelligence, now recalls, "Lev is gnomelike, a short man with a wizened, weather-beaten, lined face, and black hair. He's very bright and capable, a tough individual, full of bonhomie, but he can be very nasty when he is upset." Sandakhchiev heatedly insisted that his technician had misspoken. He called on his deputy, Sergei Netesov, to support him. The two Vector leaders insisted that there had been no work with smallpox at Vector. They had been doing genetic engineering with smallpox genes, they said, but Vector didn't have any live smallpox, only the virus's DNA—and the more they spoke the murkier their statements seemed. David Kelly remembers, "They were both lying, and it was a very, very tense moment. It seemed like an eternity, but it only lasted about fifteen minutes. And then there were so many other aspects of Vector we had to explore."

"The brazenness of these people!" one inspector later fumed. "They had been testing smallpox in their explosion chamber the week before we arrived."

Lev Sandakhchiev is still the head of Vector. He declined to be interviewed fo this account but has steadfastly maintained that no offensive bioweapons researc occurs now at Vector. In January of this year, at the Genev meeting of smallpox experts Sandakhchiev delivered paper (and may have caugh their flu). In his paper h claimed that Vector did nc have any smallpox until 199 when, he said, Vector had obtained it legally from Mos

cow. D. A. Henderson was also at that meeting. "It was quite elaborate and quite unbelievable," Henderson said. "I rolled my eyes, and saw other people rolling their eyes at me. We're sitting there, he's presenting us with all this horseshit, and he *knows* it's horseshit. Sandakhchiev is lying flagrantly."

Four sources have suggested to me that Lev Sandakhchiev was in charge of a Vector research group that in 1990 devised a more efficient way to grow weapons-grade smallpox in industrial-scale pharmaceutical tanks known as bioreactors. The Vector smallpox bioreactors had a capacity of six hundred and thirty litres—virus tanks big enough for a microbrewery. Once the Vector scientists had worked out the details of variola manufacturing, the results were written up in master production protocols—recipe books—and these protocols ended up at the Russian Ministry of Defense, in Moscow. At the time, weapons-grade smallpox was being manufactured by two older methods at a top-secret virus-munitions production plant near the city of Sergiyev Posad, forty-five miles northeast of Moscow. At another virus-munitions plant, near Pokrov, about two hundred miles southeast of Moscow, military virus-production specialists converted the plant to the new Vector method of making smallpox in the large virus bioreactors, but apparently never started the reaction. When one considers that a single person infected with smallpox would be considered a global medical emergency, this is rather a lot of smallpox activity to have bubbling near Moscow. It means that live smallpox virus and the protocols for how to mass-produce it had spread to various places in Russia by the nineteen-nineties. Indeed, live smallpox could be bubbling in reactors now at Sergiyev Posad—no one in the United States government admits to having a clue, and no Russian journalists have seen the place. Peter Jahrling said, "I really think that Vector is out of the offensive BW [biowarfare] business. But Sergiyev Posad is the black hole. We have no contacts there, and the Russians won't allow us to visit the place."

These days, Lev Sandakhchiev has cordial relationships with Peter Jahrling and Joe Esposito. They are eager to draw their colleague into the circle of open international science. During their visits to Siberia, Sandakhchiev has come across to them as warm and human, and desperate for research money to support his institute.

"Something's wrong with the broccoli. Please take it back to the kitchen and have it genetically modified."

• •

Sometimes, candid remarks slip out from the Russians. Jahrling put it this way: "There were tons of smallpox virus made in the Soviet Union. We know that. The Russians have admitted that to us. I was in a room with one of the Vector leaders when he said to us, 'Listen, we didn't account for every ampule of the virus. We had large quantities of it on hand. There were plenty of opportunities for staff members to walk away with an ampule. Although we think we know where our formerly employed scientists are, we can't account for all of them—we don't know where all of them are.' " Today, smallpox and its protocols could be anywhere in the world. A master seed strain of smallpox could be carried in a person's pocket. The seed itself could be a freeze-dried lump of virus the size of a jimmy on an ice-cream cone.

While I was sitting with D. A. Henderson in his house, I mentioned what seemed to me the great and tragic paradox of his life's work. The eradication caused the human species to lose its immunity to smallpox, and that was what made it possible for the Soviets to turn smallpox into a weapon rivalling the hydrogen bomb.

Henderson responded with silence, and then he said, thoughtfully, "I feel very sad about this. The eradication never would have succeeded without the Russians. Viktor Zhdanov started it, and they did so much. They were extremely proud of what they had done. I felt the virus was in good hands with the Russians. I never would have suspected. They made twenty tons—twenty tons—of smallpox. For us to have come so far with the disease, and now to have to deal with this human creation, when there are so many other problems in the world . . ." He was quiet again. "It's a great letdown," he said.

LOVE AND WORK

In an uncurtained room across the way
a woman in a tight dress paints her lips
a deeper red, and sizes up her hips
for signs of ounces gained since yesterday.

She has a thoughtful and a clever face,
but she is also smart enough to know
the truth: however large the brain may grow,
the lashes and the earrings must keep pace.

Although I've spread my books in front of me
with a majestic air of I'll show her,
I'm much less confident than I'd prefer,
and now I've started pacing nervously.

I'm poring over theorems, tomes and tracts.
I'm getting ready for a heavy date
by staying up ridiculously late.
But a small voice advises, Face the facts:

go on this way and you'll soon come to harm.
The world's most famous scholars wander down
the most appalling alleyways in town,
a blond and busty airhead on each arm.

There is an inner motor known as lust
that makes a man of learning walk a mile
to gratify his raging senses, while
the woman he can talk to gathers dust.

For years, the scientific community generally thought that biological weapons weren't effective as weapons, especially because it was thought that they're difficult to disperse in the air. This view persists, and one reason is that biologists know little or nothing about aerosol-particle technology. The silicon-chip industry is full of machines that can spread particles in the air. To learn more, I called a leading epidemiologist and bioterrorism expert, Michael Osterholm, who has been poking around companies and labs where these devices are invented. "I have a device the size of a credit card sitting on my desk," he said. "It makes an invisible mist of particles in the one-to-five-micron size range—that size hangs in the air for hours, and gets into the lungs. You can run it on a camcorder battery. If you load it with two tablespoons of infectious fluid, it could fill a whole airport terminal with particles." Osterholm speculated that the device could create thousands of smallpox cases in the first wave. He feels that D. A. Henderson's estimate of how fast smallpox could balloon nationally is conservative. "D.A. is looking at Yugoslavia, where the population in 1972 had a lot of protective immunity," he said. "Those immune people are like control rods in a nuclear reactor. The American population has little immunity, so it's a reactor with no control rods. We could have an uncontrolled smallpox chain reaction." This would be something that terrorism experts refer to as a "soft kill" of the United States of America.

The idea that a biological credit card could execute a soft kill of the United States has reached the White House. The chief terrorism expert on the National Security Council, Richard Clarke, has sent word through the federal government that getting national stockpiles of smallpox vaccine is a top priority.

The effort started four years ago. So far, the government has little to show except numerous meetings among agencies, with no hope of vaccine anytime soon. The Department of Defense has put all its vaccine efforts into something called the Joint Vaccine Acquisition Program, which is run by the Joint Program Office for Biological Defense. People inside the military don't want their names used when they talk about the Pentagon's efforts. "It's a fucking disaster," said one knowledgeable military officer who has had direct experience in the matter. Last year, the Pentagon hired a systems contractor called Dynport, headquartered in Reston, Virginia, to develop and make a number of different vaccines for troops. The smallpox-vaccine contract calls for three hundred thousand doses, at a cost of $22.4 million, or seventy-five dollars a dose, with delivery now scheduled for 2006. (The date has been pushed back at least once already.) This amount of vaccine could be made in about fifteen flasks the size of soda bottles. There are 2.3 million people in the armed forces, and they have several million more dependents. "Three hundred thousand doses is not enough vaccine to protect anyone—not even our troops. It totally ignores the fact that smallpox is contagious," one military man said. "These guys ought to be buying tank treads and belt buckles. They know nothing about vaccines."

The Department of Health and Human Services (H.H.S.) has been given the responsibility by the White House for producing a stockpile of smallpox vaccine large enough to protect the American civilian population in case of a bioterror event; originally, the idea was for H.H.S. to consider hiring the military's contractor, Dynport, to make forty million extra doses, in addition to the three hundred thousand that Dynport was making for the Pentagon. (Any such initiative would require competitive bidding.)

At a series of meetings at H.H.S., a top Dynport executive said that forty million doses could be quite expensive. One scientist asked if a group of knowledgeable people could be drawn togethe to come up with an estimate of costs The Dynport man answered, "Yes, w can do a study that will list the question that need to be asked. It will cost tw hundred and forty thousand dollars an will take six weeks."

Somebody then asked how much i would cost to *answer* the questions. Th Dynport official responded, "That will b a different study. That study will cost tw million dollars and will take six months

A chilling vision of the years ahead
invades my thoughts and widens like a stain:
a barren dance card and a teeming brain,
a crowded bookcase and an empty bed...

what if I compromised? I'd stay up late
to hone my elocutionary skills,
and at the crack of dawn I'd swallow pills
to calm my temper and control my weight,

but I just can't. Romantics, so far gone
they think their lovers live for wisdom, woo
by growing wiser; when I think of you
I find the nearest lamp and turn it on.

Great gods of longing, watch me as I work,
and if I sprout a martyr's smarmy grin
please find some violent way to do me in;
I'm burning all these candles not to shirk

a night of passion, but to give that night
a richly textured backdrop when it comes.
The girl who gets up from her desk and dumbs
her discourse down has never seen the flight

of wide-eyed starlings from their shabby cage;
the fool whose love is truest is the one
who knows a lover's work is never done.
I'll call you when I've finished one more page.

—RACHEL WETZSTEON

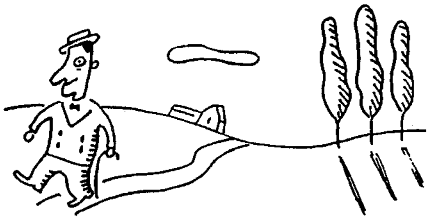
With that, one scientist at the meeting burst out, "This is horseshit! We're asking an encyclopedia salesman if we need an encyclopedia!"

The C.E.O. of Dynport, Stephen Prior, said that the situation is more complicated: "The civilian population is very different from the military. There's an age spread from newborns to the elderly; there's more compromised immunity, with AIDS, chemotherapy, and organ transplants. And possibly thirty-five per cent of people have never been vaccinated. So it's not just scaling up the manufacturing."

Another knowledgeable observer is the retired Army General Philip K. Russell, M.D., who gave the order to send biohazard troops into Reston in 1989 to deal with a building full of monkeys infected with Ebola. Russell said o me, "Many of us are afraid that Dynport won't deliver the goods without wasting an inordinate amount of money."

However, H.H.S. has quietly opened talks with other potential contractors, preparing to solicit bids to make a civilian stockpile of smallpox vaccine, though there has been no announcement. "The effort at H.H.S. still isn't organized," D. A. Henderson said. General Russell said, "If smallpox really got going, people should be most concerned about a lack of effective leadership on the part of their government."

I WANTED to get closer to smallpox virus. In Joe Esposito's lab, at the Centers for Disease Control, there was a test going of a biosensor device for detecting smallpox. It was a machine in a black suitcase. It could detect a bioweapon using the process called the polymerase chain reaction, or P.C.R.—the same kind of molecular fingerprinting that police use to identify the DNA of a crime suspect. The suitcase thing was called a Cepheid Briefcase Smart Cycler, and it had been co-invented by M. Allen Northrup, a biomedical engineer who founded a company to make and sell biosensors. He was there, along with a cluster of other scientists.



Esposito, the official guardian of one half of the world's official supply of smallpox, handed a box of tubes to a scientist in the room. Two of the tubes contained the whole DNA of smallpox virus but not live smallpox. The DNA drifted in a drop of water; it was the Rahima strain. Two other tubes contained anthrax. The samples were snapped into slots in the machine.

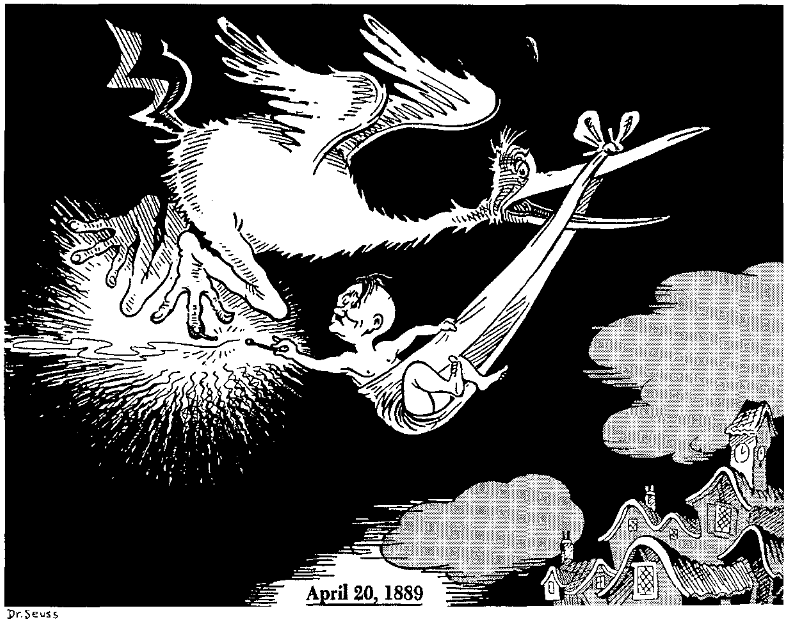
Northrup turned his attention to a laptop computer that nestled in the machine. Northrup is a chunky man with a mustache and reddish-brown hair. He tapped on the keys.

We waited around, chatting. Meanwhile, the Cepheid was working silently. It showed colored lines on its screen. In fifteen minutes, the anthrax lines started going straight up, and someone said, "The anthrax is screaming." Finally, one of the smallpox lines crept upward, slowly. "That's a positive for smallpox, not so bad," a scientist said. Emergency-response teams could carry a Cepheid suitcase to the scene of a bioterror event and begin testing people immediately for anthrax or smallpox. The machine is priced at sixty thousand dollars.

Afterward, Joe Esposito went around collecting the used tubes. The smallpox-sample holder—a plastic thing the size of a thumbnail—had been left on a counter. I picked it up.

Esposito wasn't about to let anyone walk off with smallpox. "Leave me that tube," he said. "You are not allowed to have more than twenty per cent of the DNA."

Before I handed it to him, I glanced at a little window in the tube. When I held it up to the light, the liquid looked like clear water. The water contained the whole molecules of life from variola, a parasite that had colonized us thousands of years ago. We had almost freed ourselves of it, but we found we had developed a strong affinity for smallpox. Some of us had made it into a weapon, and now we couldn't get rid of it. I wondered if we ever would, for the story of our entanglement with smallpox is not yet ended. ♦



NOTEBOOK

HORTON HEARS A HEIL

BY ART SPIEGELMAN

WHAT? Dr. Seuss, beloved purveyor of genial rhyming nonsense for beginning readers, stuff about Cats in Hats and Foxes in Socks, worked as a radical *political* cartoonist who exhorted America to do battle with Hitler? Yeah, right! And Ad Reinhardt—the guy who painted austere black-on-black abstractions—used to draw comic strips explaining Modern Art to the uninitiated! Both these unlikely phenomena did in fact occur in the pages of what may well have been America's most remarkable daily newspaper, New York's *PM*. This short-lived "popular front" tabloid eschewed all paid advertising, though it regularly printed announcements of department-store bargains as news items. (It also first published "Barnaby," a once revered intellectual comic strip by Crockett Johnson, who later created the "Harold and the Purple Crayon" kid books.) In some happier alternate universe, *PM* is still being published daily and Dr. Seuss was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his anti-Fascist *PM* cartoons of 1941 and 1942. Actually, Dr. Seuss did get a Pulitzer in the universe we inhabit: a special citation in 1984 "for his contribution over nearly half a century to the education and enjoyment of America's children and their parents." Presumably, though, most of that award committee was as unaware of his war cartoons as the rest of us. While it's true that most of these cartoons lack the weight and gravitas of the cartoons by Herblock that received the Pulitzer in 1942, they are still very impressive evidence of cartooning as an art of persuasion.

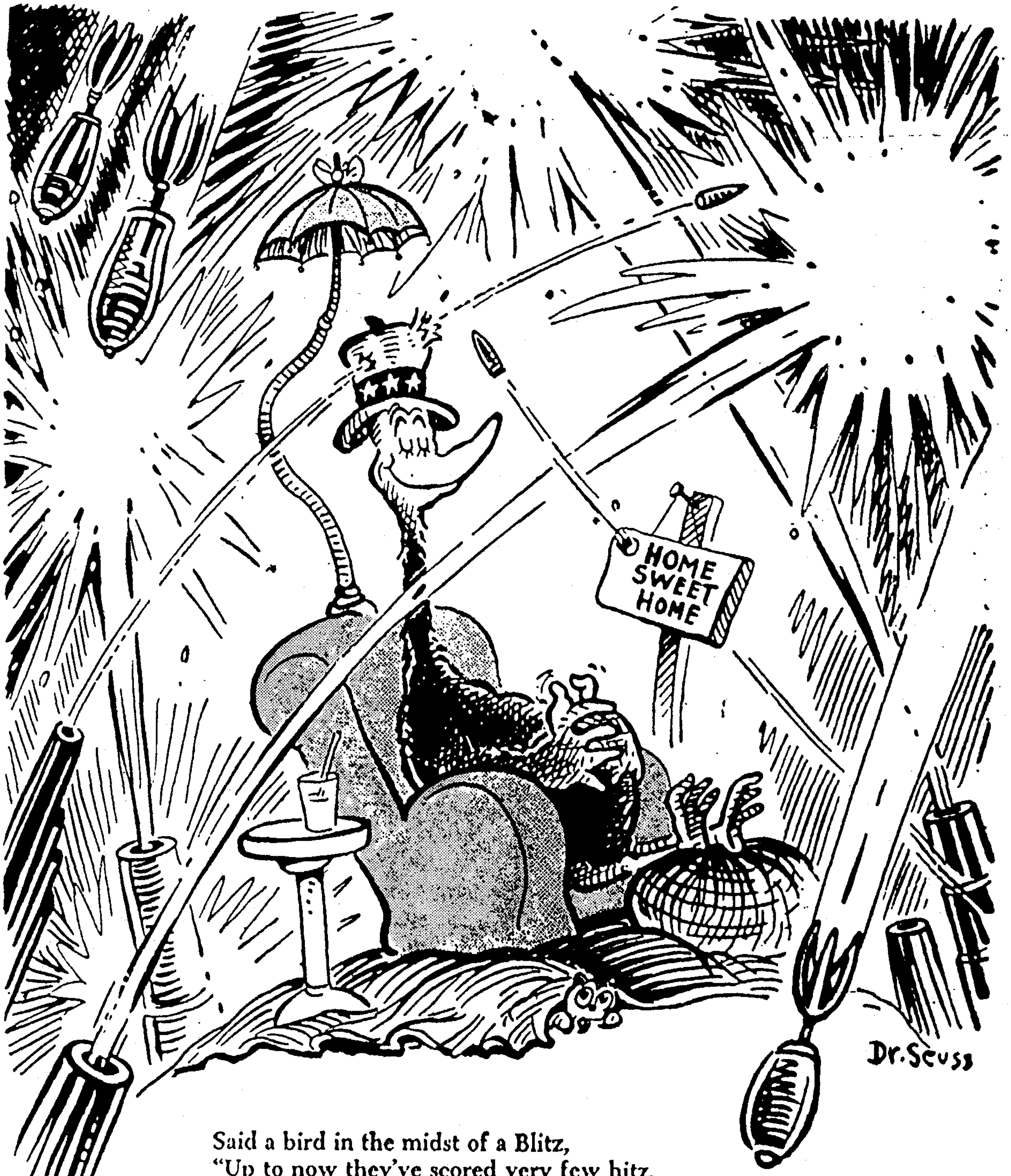
These cartoons rail against Isolationism, Racism, and Anti-Semitism with a conviction and fervor lacking in most other American editorial pages of the period. They are virtually the only editorial cartoons outside the Communist and black press that decried the military's Jim Crow policies and Charles Lindbergh's anti-Semitism. Dr. Seuss said that he "had no great causes or interest in social issues until Hitler," and explained, "*PM* was against people who pushed other people around. I liked that." More a humanist than an ideologue—one of those Groucho rather than Karl Marxists—Dr. Seuss made these drawings with the fire of honest indignation and anger that fuels all real political art. If they have a flaw, it's an absolutely endearing one: they're funny.

Many of the editorial cartoonists of the time used grease crayon for their effects, evidence of their roots in the Daumier tradition. Dr. Seuss's twisted roots, on the other hand, were in the vaudeville tradition of early comic strips and gag cartoons. Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss's "real" name) began his career in the late nineteen-twenties, doing gag cartoons for the two most important humor magazines of the time, *Judge* and *Life*. He won his early fame for a long-lived series of cartoons advertising a bug spray called Flit. In 1935, he briefly turned out "Hejji," a comic strip for King Features. And he produced four well-received children's books before hooking up with *PM*, though his grand-scale success as a children's-book artist didn't come until the late fifties. But the idioms of the picture book, the comics, gag cartoons, and advertising informed his *PM* work. Over the past twenty or thirty years, the newspaper editorial cartoon has reduced its ambition, basically becoming a gag cartoon with political subject matter. Dr. Seuss's political cartoons were, perhaps, ahead of their time in seeking to entertain as well as to convince. This is by no means to deny Seuss's earnestness; it's just that—much as with Chaplin's "The Great Dictator"—comedy was too frail a weapon to deal mortal blows to Hitler. (On the other hand, the far more vitriolic cartoons of George Grosz and John Heartfield were no more adequate to the task.)

An annotated collection of the *PM* cartoons will be published by the New Press this fall. One of the great pleasures of this anthology (beyond the not inconsiderable one of offering a painless history lesson on the side) is the affirmation of just how good the good Doctor really was: he called 'em as he saw 'em, and most of the time he was on the side of the angels. The greatest pleasure, though, lies in watching the artist develop his goofily surreal vision while he delivers the ethical goods. The unique galumphing menagerie of Seussia fauna, the screwball humor, and th themes that later enraptured millions (a well as making many millions for th artist) come into focus in these earl drawings, which were done with ur gency on very short deadlines.

The *PM* cartoons make us mor aware of the political messages ofte embedded within the sugar pill of D Seuss's signature zaniness. For better o worse, the didactic moralist struggled for supremacy over the iconoclastic jokester in much of his mature—could that be the right adjective?—work. "Yertle the Turtle" (visually prefigured in a stack of turtles forming a victory V in a March 20, 1942, cartoon) is an anti-Fascist tract. "The Sneetches" is clearly a plea for racial tolerance. (What are those stars on thar bellies, if not Stars of David?) An environmental message overwhelms any of the nonsense in "The Lorax," and the polemic for nuclear disarmament in "The Butter Battle Book" created a blizzard of controversy when it first appeared, in 1984.

The Cat in the Hat's red-and-white striped leaning tower of a stovepipe has become an American icon only somewhat less recognizable than the Disney mouse's ears. Seeing the slightly battered lid on the Seuss bird that represents the U.S. in many of the *PM* drawings (presumably it's an eagle, though it looks as much like a Sneetch and suspiciously like the prominently beaked Theodor Geisel himself) is disorienting enough to bring on an epiphany: the prototype for the cat's famous headgear is actually an emblem deployed in countless political cartoons—Uncle Sam's red-and-white striped top hat! The Cat in the Hat *is* America! ♦

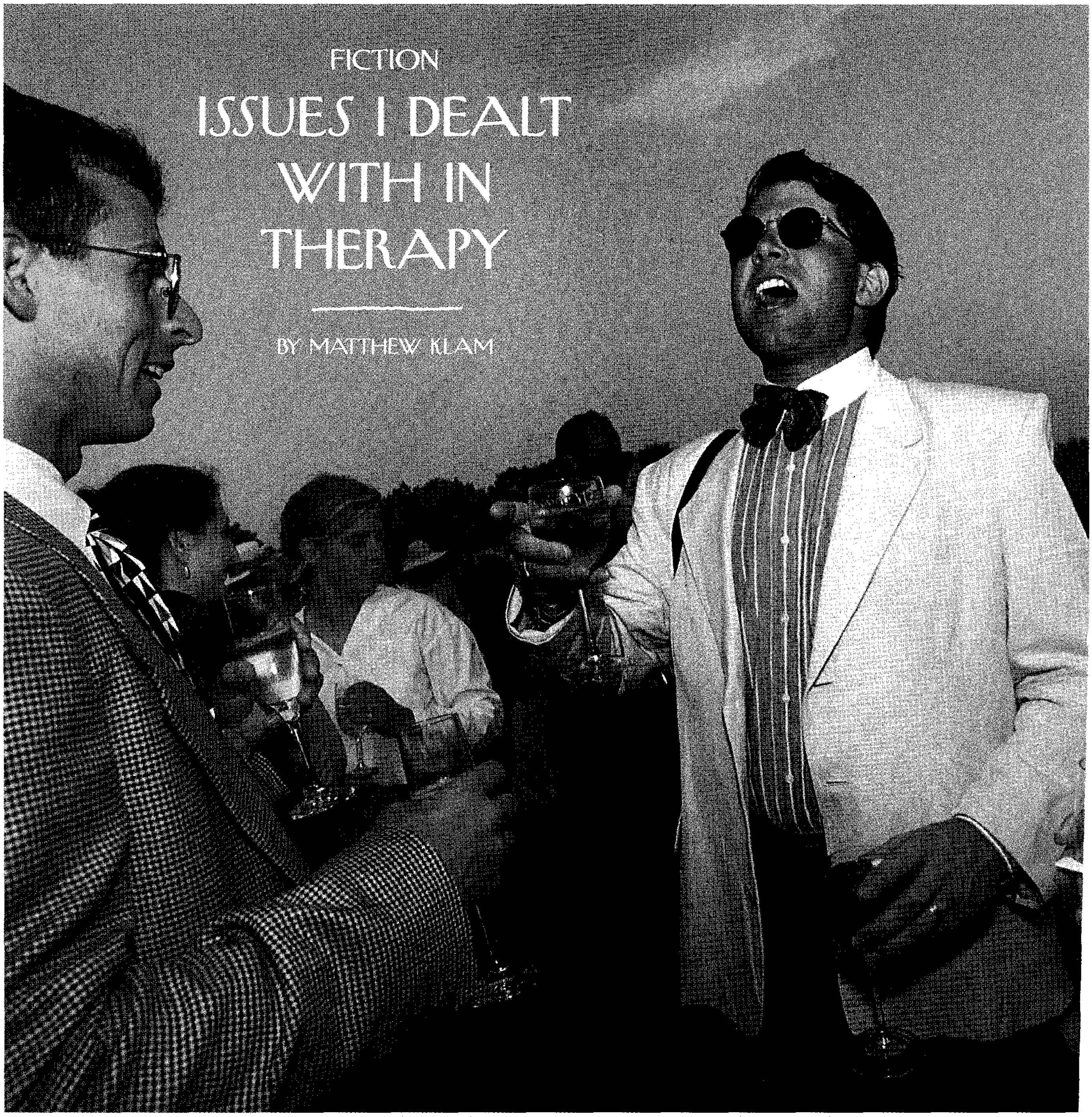


Said a bird in the midst of a Blitz,
"Up to now they've scored very few hitz,
So I'll sit on my canny
Old Star Spangled Fanny . . ."
And on it he sitz and he sitz.

FICTION

ISSUES I DEALT WITH IN THERAPY

BY MATTHEW KLAM



We were on a preppy East Coast resort island, in the middle of summer, we just flew in for the wedding of my incredible friend Bob. We were here on vacation, away from the hot city; I was so glad to be out of that fucking house. The simple fact that it's a plane trip away and you're staying in a hotel on this fake, preppy island, and because you're not married and yet you're at a wedding together, because you're too cheap to go on decent vacations, because your own day-to-day life could use some tuning up and like any sane person you've already effortlessly erected an invisible barrier between yourself and that life back there and you're now pretending that it isn't real, and because Bob had become this big deal, your most skyrocketing friend, and Bob's wedding weekend finally arrived—well, it's a new beginning and I was feeling the excitement.

We got to the hotel and parked the rental car and walked down to the water in our street clothes. People passed by with beach umbrellas and L. L. Bean canvas tote bags, floating in the heat; kids ran happily in the wet patch left by the outgoing tide, and seagulls hovered rigidly in the air above us, screaming into the wind. We walked back up through the mushy sand to the steps of the parking lot of the hotel, Phylida's long white translucent sundress blowing in front of me. We passed the advance team for Gore, fifteen blond-haired women in their early twenties, wearing hairbands, talking on cell phones on the little patch of grass bordering some brown split-wood railings in front of the hotel.

I was looking at everything: the people getting out of the rental cars, the bracelets on the women, the sunshine brightly beaming. It was Bob's sunshine, you were on his island now. I looked back at Phylida; she smiled. The wind lifted her dress all the way up in the front, before she could catch it. A guy struggled to pull out his golf clubs from the trunk and a valet half his age whisked the bag away like a feather. The wife laughed. Who were they? I think every room in the hotel was rented to the four hundred people invited to the wedding.

It was an old wooden hotel, the charming kind, creaking stairway, crooked floors. Our room was small, antique crap n it, a jingling glass lampshade on a side able, a queen-size bed raised to an enormous height, a frilly cover, a cheap, modern glass door on sliders leading out to a wooden balcony that gave you splinters and, as promised, looked out on a downwind stretch of the same beach where Bob and Niloo would be getting married, a mile away.

They'd been hyping us with stuff in the mail for six months: the "Set this date aside" card; the letter that began, "Tell us exactly what you eat," with rows of boxes to check off ("Are you dairy tolerant?" "Do you like sushi or do you eat it to be polite?" "Our chef will not cook with peanuts"). The six-piece engraved invitation. Lists of the island's golf courses, a note about where they were registered ("Sheetmaker to the Earl of Windsor"), a special mailing to the lady guests—"We hope you'll start shopping for that perfect full-length formal summer gown to wear to our summer wedding on the shore." Another list for me because I was an usher, what kind of tux shirt collar they (Bob) wanted us to get, suggested books for preparing your toast. A sheet of facts on the island, how great Americans retired here; how it played a part in the Revolutionary War, how the something of democracy was born here, with a letter Bob typed up—"to help free our nation of tyranny evermore and make America the most wonderful country in the world."

The freak-show element of the wedding was like a side thing: Madeleine Albright would be here tomorrow; Ruth Bader Ginsburg insisted on performing the ceremony; that advance team for Gore trying to figure out whether the rain would hold off so Al could helicopter in for an appearance.

What was I doing here?

Bob and I met during graduate school at a food drive for torture victims of repressive regimes; Bob was in charge of cans. He was silly and fun, a goofy guy in a baseball hat. He studied civil-rights law. He said he wanted to help black people straighten out the mess. I was getting a master's in international relations. Our friendship was based on leaving each other messages in fake Spanish accents, discussing girls' private areas, pretending we were rich. The next semester we became roommates. He came home at eleven o'clock and inhaled vats of popcorn.

We graduated. Bob moved out to be closer to the Justice Department. He worked in civil rights; he desegregated a poor school district in Mississippi that was secretly being run by the Klan. Bob jailed them. I sort of worshipped him. I thought he was Superman. I'd stop by and see him working, and even the tiniest tic—the way his leg shook when he spoke, the way he filed papers by throwing them on the floor—seemed magnified, intentional, smart.

They won a big case and he got to go on the televised press conference. He sat up tall and straight. He'd cut his hair short for it. Every answer out of his mouth was like a perfectly fired javelin. The camera refused to move from him. He'd starved himself on those long trips to Mississippi and now, with no hair, he looked like an astronaut.

Soon he was having chats with Janet Reno. He'd moved up. "It's titular." What's titular? "We do planning." They had some sticky problems in Immigration and Naturalization: they were trying to figure out how to throw Haitians back in the water. When I phoned him at work he could only whisper. He gave the impression that things were hectic and constantly needed his attention. We still talked about our old plans to do good, we wanted to open a soup kitchen in a motor home and drive it around, but he liked seeing himself on the news, and the next time we were together he did a long analysis reworking the performance I saw on TV. He went to events at the White House, standing in for the Attorney General. "After Memorial Day," he explained, "you wear the white dinner jacket."

Time passed. He met everybody. He called Barbara Walters at home. He had four thousand names in his hand-held electronic Rolodex. I swung by his apartment. He stuck handwritten notes from King Hussein on his refrigerator, photos of himself coming down the steps of Air Force One, looking pale and tired. He'd become important and I gladly took what he handed me, a box of candy, an opened bottle of peach schnapps, outpourings of guilt he felt at the sight of me.

He quit Justice and went to work on a guy's campaign. He ran it and won. You saw Bob on TV on Election Night, dancing in a hat made out of a dinner napkin. He became a "media catastrophe consultant." What's that? He "befriended politicians under fire." He sat in on meetings. Alone, just the two of us, he entertained me with indiscretions, the congressman who distributed photocopies of his testicles, the federal judge who fell into fetal position when women said no. He needed somebody to be his friend, to help him grasp what he'd become, but I also got the feeling he went in and out of remembering I was there.

He bought a nice house. He got a smaller cell phone, a full-time squirrelly assistant cutting into our lunches to tell Bob he had to go. He went to work for Senator Sheslow, whose wife just had a stroke, she was an invalid; Sheslow thought he might run for President. Bob was flying to Dallas and Japan, talking to folks. "It's like fund-raising." And Al Gore was calling to consider him for a job. These jobs didn't have names anymore. "I'll be the youngest member of Gore's top guys," he told me in his monotone robotic rambling into the speakerphone as he drove alone somewhere, exhausted. "It'll be utterly outstanding," he said.

He had other distinctions. A booming voice, big hands, thick fingers, brown-colored dents on his car from backing into trees, a colossal memory, he could produce anything ever said in passing, the name of my childhood pet turtle, how Sheslow voted on a tax bill fifteen years before, it all sat front row on his mind, it was all immediate. He knew Bill Bradley's weak spots, the trajectory of Chinese rocketry. He had constant weight problems. He shrunk and ballooned and went on diets. He was hungry. He kept popcorn in a lunch bag in his suit-coat pocket. He bit his fingernails till they bled like they'd been shoved inside a sink disposal. I'd wonder, What's he gonna do next? Why did he like me? Why was Bill Clinton calling this guy for advice when he couldn't park his car without hanging two wheels on the curb?

The way he spoke now had changed, he used the word "outstanding," the word "sequentially." The last time I saw him was at this brunch fund-raiser he made me go to, he'd been bingeing on wheatgrass pills for four days and had stomach cramps and diarrhea but he said he felt "fantastic." And the way he acted now—in the last year and a half he went from a young power-hungry sellout to looking like my Uncle Denny with a fat gut and the sweaty sheen, wetting his shirts, singing corny showtunes into my answering machine. "I'm sorry I called at such a late hour, the next time I do I'll bring you a flower."

Seeing him, the rare times I now got together with him, passing by his office at the Capitol, stopping at his house to be yawned at, or snored at, was like visiting his grave. Niloo would watch his snoring nostrils, he looked like a gorilla, and go "He flies pretty high, doesn't he?" or "Guess who phoned us last night." In the old days I could get up and go home. Now I had to listen to his bullshit from her, too, swallow it twice.

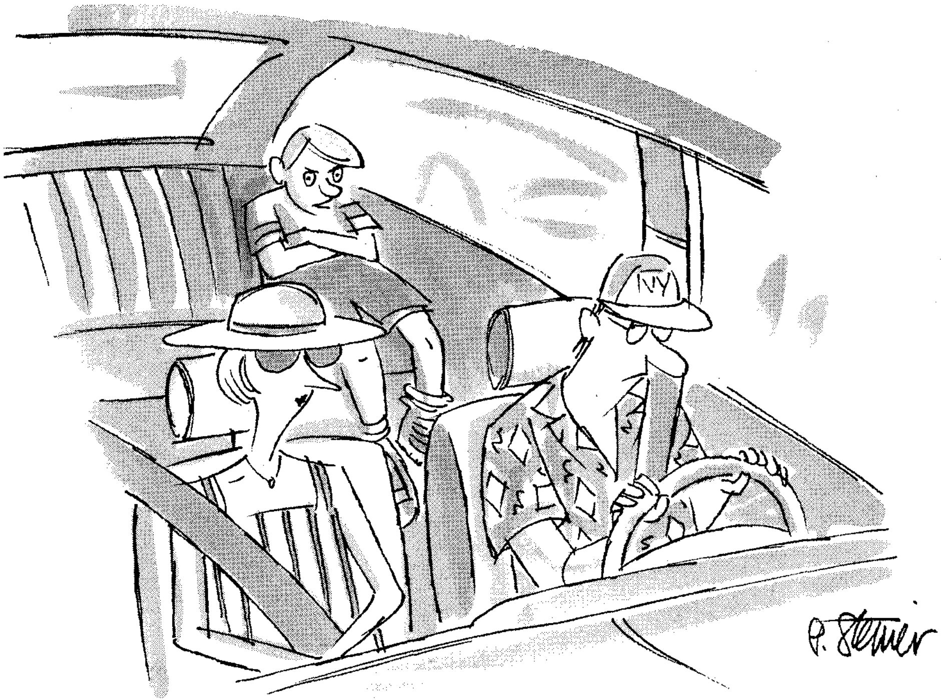
PERSONNEL
ONLY
NO ADMITTANCE
Shanahan

"His underwear was spotless."

PHYLIDA and I stepped out onto the balcony. White wicker chairs with cushions, a table, warped by weather, resting on three legs. Two guys stood on the balcony next to ours, doing what we were doing, feeling the air. They were Italians, friends of Bob and Niloo's, also just arrived. Both guys were tan, had facial hair, wore mirrored lenses. They'd changed into swimming stuff and were ready to go down to the beach. They looked like a couple. One guy wore a very fine loosely woven shiny multicolor sweater in the zillion-degree sun. He fingered his webbed beach purse. The other guy had clean-shaven legs that were flawless and brown. The guy with the purse said, "We met them vacationing at a place like this in Lisbon." I had a panicky urge to figure out when Bob and Niloo had been to Lisbon, but I couldn't picture what continent Lisbon was on, so I said, "What kind of place was that?" Both guys smiled at once. I'd been holding Phylida's hand, and brought it up and kissed it.

On the balcony on the other side a woman sat alone having a beer. Her name was Sebastian. She had a long washed-out-green dress unwrinkling on a hanger and the ocean breeze kept tipping it into her face as she sat, looking pale and basically dead, squinting into the hot sun reflecting off the ocean. Phylida leaned across the railing and asked, "Did you and Niloo grow up together in New Jersey?" Sebastian knew Niloo from college. She offered Phylida a beer. Already, the first lonely person Phylida saw she befriended. I went back inside and hung up my suit.

I lay down on the bed and listened to the women chat. Phylida was leaning on the balcony divider, moving her weight back and forth, her butt aimed at the opening in the doorway at my feet. Phylida's butt had become the focal point of our life together. It was soft and circular and amazing. I wanted to crawl inside it. I got comfort knowing it was there. She was explaining her medical residency to Sebastian. Now it was swinging. I shu my eyes and began twitching, conking out like the overworked dead person with bad breath who I'd become.



"I hope you realize that I'm the one who has to write about this stupid vacation next fall."

• •

After a while Phylida came in and closed the sliding glass door and the see-through curtain, and lay down next to me and explained that Sebastian hadn't rented a car and wanted to ride over with us to the rehearsal dinner. Then she fell asleep. She hadn't slept all week. She hadn't slept in seven months and four years. Medical residents are sleep deprived. On call for three surgical rotations this week, she slept through her beeper one night, what they call a "no-hitter," got clobbered with huge repair jobs the next two nights, came home in a black cloud, unable to talk.

I said, "Are you asleep?" She didn't move. "How can somebody name a girl Sebastian?"

Phylida and I never fought. We also never saw each other. Our life consisted of lengths of days, with nothing fun in the middle. We got together and listed what had happened since the last time we spoke, became sad, and fell asleep. I kissed her canted hipbone through the cotton of the dress. I ran my finger along her "zipper," the scar that went from her sternum to her crotch, open-heart surgery as a kid, what got her interested in medicine back then, coarctation of the aorta—a narrow, collapsing aorta, congenitally smushed. I said, "Should I let you sleep?"

She said, "Did I sleep on the plane?" I said yes. She turned toward me exhaling. "This'll be us someday."

"What?"

"You and me."

Phylida and I were on the verge of omething. Picture us picturing ourelves as next in line for our own wedling weekend. (We'd already talked bout what kind of ring I would get er—the stone, the setting.) Picture us vondering: Why does this feel like othing? Picture us thinking the same hing separately and not talking about it nd coming up empty. She was trying o be nice, waiting for that fucking ring ow for months and months, she did er perfect imitation of a good girliend, holding my Coke in the car, but made her furious and we both wanted get this over with.

I went for her chest, unbuttoning as st as I could, pulling off her dress, opening up her bra. She looked in my eyes and waited.

I ran my hands all over her body. Phylida let out a breath and smiled. Her flaxen hair fell across a pillow. I kissed her nipples. She liked that. She did a noise with her tongue against her teeth—"tchk"—as I moved my hands around her silky cream mountains. I'd always been attracted to her, although sometimes she walked down the street like John Wayne with his dungarees shoved up his ass in "Stagecoach."

"They're yours," she said.

"What is?"

"This is the last pair of tits you'll ever squeeze," she said, and giggled.

"Why do you have to talk as if you just got out of an insane asylum?" I said. She smiled.

I licked her ribs. She had a perfect face. She had a single blond hair coming out of her chin I never saw before. She wore old blue cotton panties with just a slight fume of musk and salt. She let me pull them all the way down. She had a cunt. It was pink and cunt-shaped and smelled like roses. What else? She had a mother and a father. She made a bubble noise in her sleep. She lived for running late; she drove fast, ran people over in crosswalks. She smelled like saddle soap.

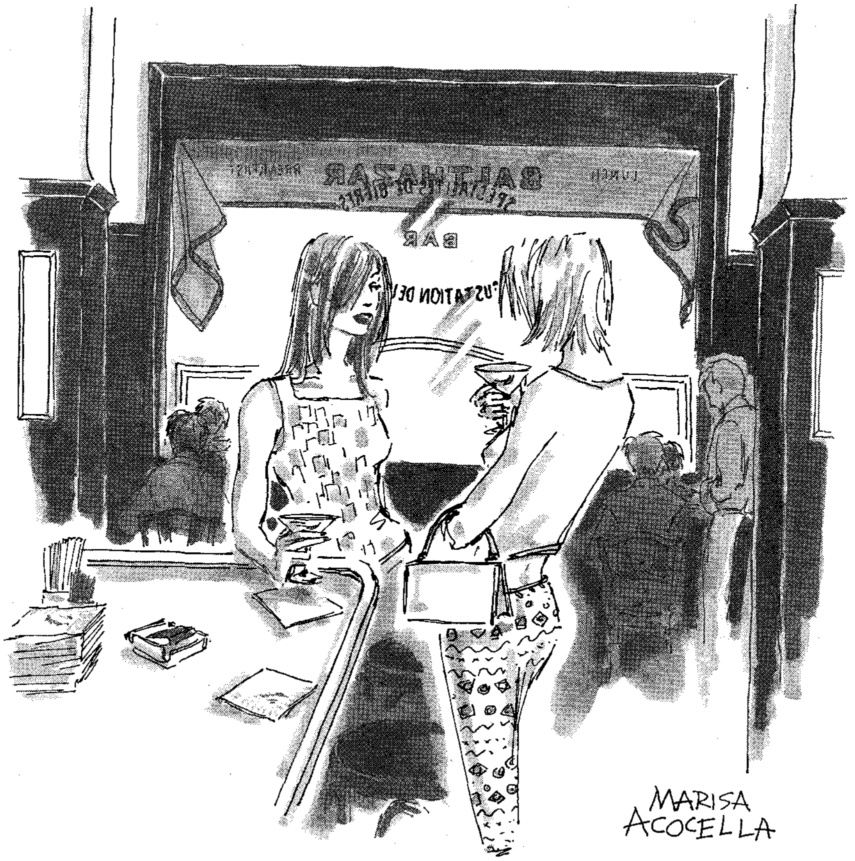
"I like that," she said, pulling at me.

It terrified me when she acted like a slut. I said, "Let me get unbuckled."

Bob's fantastic wedding weekend, plane ride from Boston, dry in-flight peanuts, mysterious hotel on the ocean, the grooved tracks of nauseating similarities between us and every other person in this hotel, in the world. I stared at her. I wanted to get married, too. I wanted to be swept away. Phylida and I had talked about our whole lives, where to live, how to live, we met the other's family, everybody loved everybody, yabba blabba—the only thing left was, like, pull the trigger, get that ring!

She said, "Your winky is starting to get a little small." She said this in a bright voice. She held it at the base, the outline of her lips was white, and blew me a little.

I could feel myself spiralling away from sex. I looked down at Phylida, beautifully pumping away, and the face of Steven Spielberg floated into my mind, expressionless, bearded, dumbfounded. I thought of how much money he had. He had a private jet with customized woodwork interior, two daybeds, and a cup-holder by every win-



"So what if he doesn't know Ovid. He knows Ovitz."

• •

dow. A friend of Bob's, some jackass named Dan who helped me plan the order of the toasts this weekend, also had a private jet. Shares of Dan's amazing start-up company cost twenty-six cents two years ago. This morning they were worth forty-seven dollars. Some of the other invitees were in on Dan's first stock offering. They had names like Lafayette and Sky. I didn't have enough money to be showing my face around this crowd. Sometimes when I travelled for work I pretended I was a foreign spy. I wasn't a spy. Dan would be arriving in his jet today; in a half hour, in fact. I knew all this because Bob suggested I offer Dan my personal chauffeuring services but I actually wouldn't be able to because Dan could go fuck himself.

Happiness. Half penis. I didn't have the slightest interest in fooling around.

I pushed Phylida off me. She looked up, smiling, trying to keep the mood upbeat. Her red mouth, her beautiful face. I would've liked to chop my dick off and fling it from the balcony. "It's not gonna work," I said.

"Don't get hysterical."

"It happened last week. That's twice in a row."

"It happens to you every time we try to have sex away from home." She touched her lips. Her eyelashes were like a foot long.

I said, "I fucked you in Mexico."

"You fucked me in Mexico."

"Right."

"Don't get all penis-focussed."

"Could we not talk about it and make me feel even worse?"

"You're thinking about getting married, our life together. You're worried about eternity."

"Oh Christ."

"I'm trying to help."

I stood, wearing just my underwear, and walked to the bathroom.

"You're rushing. You're tired."

"Thank you."

"You have a wedgie."

The bathroom had a full set of amenities in a wicker basket. French soap in a plastic case, English shampoo, a thing to shine shoes. I felt humiliated. In the mirror a highly detailed advertisement for blackheads stared back at me. I heard her speaking to someone about her outfit for tonight. "It's blue and it has an A line." I couldn't hear what else she said. She giggled.

"What's so funny?"

"I'm telling my mother how fat I look in my dress." I gargled with the complimentary mouthwash. Phylida lay naked, propped on the bed, and put her hand over the receiver.

"My mother said the problem is in your mind and you have nothing to worry about." Ha! Good one! She switched from me back to the phone to me again and said, "She said I should get you some of those pills and you'll be fine."

I thought she was kidding.

She said goodbye.

"Was there really somebody on the other end?"

"Relax," she said. "Anyway, that medication's not what it's cracked up to be."

"Is that what you told your mother?"

"It's a joke. Lighten up. We're on vacation." She said something about absorption problems inhibiting blood flow. "Worst case scenario, science can do things for this now." She looked at me with her earnest bullshit doctor face. She started dialling another number.

"Hang up the phone."

"I have to check my messages." She rested the phone on her pubic bone. "There's a procedure. They make a two-centimetre incision at the base of the phallus and slide a lubricated sterile tube inside. It explodes and stiffens when you activate the prosthetic device." Phylida was in the surgery unit and had a real talent for it and liked taking a scalpel to living people while pretending to save them.

"You don't mean explode," I said "That word would be expand." (I didn'

want anyone exploding my dick.)

"It's an outpatient procedure."

"Are you dialling direct?"

"Why?"

"Because hotels rip you off."

"You're not the boss of my money. She sat there, now sadly looking at th neatly spiralled phone cord lying alon her small flat belly, the phone coverin her nice vagina.

I DROVE as Phylida read the pre mailed directions ("Unschedule toasts may come after dessert and co fee") through town to the restauran Every inch of street was jammed wi traffic and sunburned people in salmon-colored shorts shoving past each other, licking melting ice cream off their wrists. Sebastian talked non-stop: "I wonder if Bibbity Blob is coming. She'll have to put her hair up if she has a tiara." She talked about Niloo's college days: "She bought a new purse every time she went to New York City. She slept with what's-his-name." When we pulled in line for the car valet Sebastian asked if I had a tissue and cleared her throat and served up a little morsel of vomit. "I hate this kind of thing," she said.

The women walked behind me as I strode through the restaurant, trying to think of a way to tell people I'd been to London twice for work in the last six months. There was a patio where people stood drinking. The dining area was out back under a tent. We said hello to Bob's parents and met Niloo's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Niyangoda and Mr. Niyangoda's new wife, Naomi. Phylida looked around and said it all seemed nice and I nodded and she said, "At my wedding the bridesmaids will wear metallic scarves, very little makeup, full-length illusion skirts."

Phylida and Sebastian moved off to find food. A man with a foreign accent came up to me and said I was not to worry: even though he'd lost ten million dollars when he consolidated his businesses, the former premier of France was on his new executive board. He then drank his drink, said nothing, and stared at me. Another man joined us, holding a cigarette. His face had fine lines like an apple going soft. He said he thought the island was beautiful. People chatted. An older woman pulled on the skin of her throat and said, "I'm going to have this done." At the other end of the lawn I spotted Phylida chewing; her mouth was full and she waved her hand at me furiously in an exaggerated gleeful way. There was no sorrow in that jaw. I didn't have the money to marry that girl. Originally I iked her because she looked dumb. I didn't know she was a doctor. She swam some delicacy n front of her mouth to taunt me before popping it in, and a ullfrog bellowed sadly nearby, a noise similar to one my dad made when he let one go. My heart felt like an anvil.

Candles were being lit inside the tent. I picked up the scent of pipe tobacco and gardenias. The moon came out. I spotted Bob in a blue tie and a red silk pocket square and a straw-colored jacket that was already damply dark under the arms from sweat. The last time I spoke to him was three months earlier when he left me waiting at a Thai restaurant until I gave up, because on the way over Sheslow beeped him. "Well," he said. The deep voice. "Come with me."

I wondered if Bob was taking me aside to explain why he'd chosen me as an usher. I wondered if maybe he was flipping out and needed now to talk seriously about marrying Niloo. He pulled out a set of keys. The sky was dusky and you could see fireflies.

He said, "My father-in-law brought some wine in his car. Would you just give me a hand?"

As we looked for the car in an open field beside the patio I reminded Bob that we hadn't spoken in months. He tried to remember our last talk. "I'm at a loss," he said, smiling.

"Where do you go for your honeymoon?" I asked.

"A tiny island nation near Sri Lanka." He said he knew the king.

As we got to the trunk of Mr. Niyangoda's black Mercedes I noticed that Bob's sweat stains had spread up his chest.

How was work?

"Fantastic." This was the most incredible week of his life. He put his finger in my face. "Sheslow will be the next President of the United States. I have no doubt." They'd just been tacitly endorsed by this one slob, things were zooming. "We will make our nation strong and safe and ethnic violence will be eradicated by prosperity." He was going on C-SPAN on Monday. His shirt collar pinched his neck just slightly, so an arc of flesh hung from his chin. "We're bringing slot machines to highway rest stops."

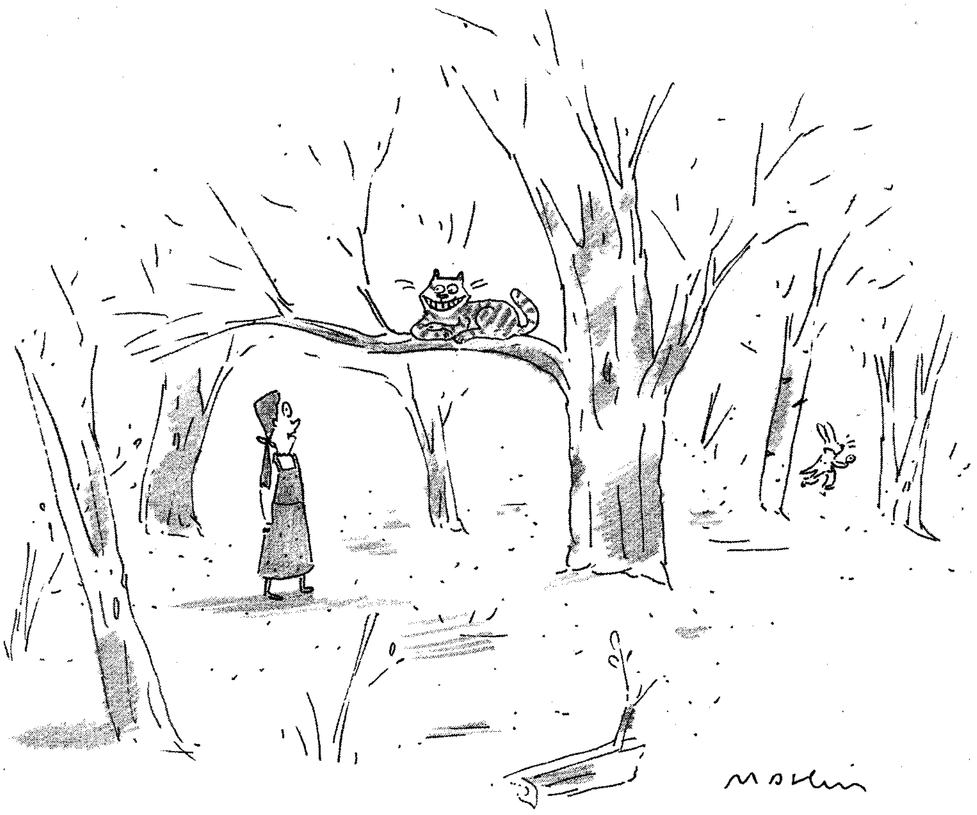
I said, "How does C-SPAN decide—"

He checked his beeper and called in to work while I listened to the tones of his tiny flip phone, waiting.

No word yet from Gore. "If he comes tomorrow," he said, "I've got the job."

"What about the Senator's Presidency?" I asked.

"Staying where I am would be a lat-



"When I look at you, I see more than just a cat—I see the rewards of a conscientiously applied program of dental hygiene."

SECOND HELPING

Since the heart attack, I come up the stairs
and say to myself, “Now I’m opening
the door, now I’m hanging up my coat, now I hear
someone yell ‘Daddy!’ in my extra life.”
It’s like having seconds after Thanksgiving dinner,
savoring my favorite things, but not quite.
It’s as if I now feast on turnips and cranberry sauce,
the mundane side dishes I used to push aside
for more stuffing and gravy, more flamboyant breast.
I count the hops out loud ad infinitum
as my daughter jumps rope in the living room.
In my regular life, I would
have had thoughts in my head.
In my extra life, I don’t.

—Doug Dorph

eral move.” He thought more and said, “In my heart I know he’s a freak.”

I said, “Bob, you’re going to the White House.”

He said, “I can’t believe my life!”

In the trunk there were four cases of wine. The cases were made of wood. He said, “Do you know about *premier cru*?” He gave it his disgusting French accent. He lifted up one and read the name off the box. “Stuff like this goes right to the collectors,” he said. He slid the case toward me along the lip of the trunk and sighed, grinning widely as the light from the restaurant caught the sheen on his temples, and whispered, “I feel like a god right now, you know?”—he was having a kind of galaxial moment—as the case began falling between us like some terrible tipped boulder and we both lunged for it, trying to stop it with our knees, and failing, as it slipped down the bumper, and there was a miserable gnashing of sound, the unmistakable sound, of glass breaking.

Bob came up with his teeth set across his open mouth. I froze. “Are you crazy?” he said.

I said, “You had it.”

He called me an idiot, in the voice he used—well, pretty often, come to think of it. He tore a panel off the top of the crate and very carefully checked each bottle, setting them neatly on the grass. The neck of one was cracked beneath the foil and the top came off when he touched it, gushing wine. “Convenient twist-off,” he said, staring at me insanely, and poured the rest on the grass in front of me and turned and fired the bottle out of sight. It went through some trees and smashed.

“That’s five hundred dollars,” he said, “about three times what you paid for your fucking suit, dickbreath.”

I pointed to the red stain on his blazer. I couldn’t help myself.

“My God,” he said. “Look at my—look at my coat!” He held his elbow up in the air, astonished, and then spotted his shirt cuff, also stained. “You got my cuff, too!” In fact, I hadn’t spilled anything anywhere. My gaze fell naturally to his shoes—a mistake.

“My Cole-Haan, you got it on my shoe!” We both reached down at the same time to wipe the wine off his *leche*-colored shoe and banged heads. He stood up, insane now, and in the split second in which he appeared to be deciding whether to punch me out or laugh he suddenly poked me in the forehead with his nail-hard poking finger and said, “That’s using the old noggin!” He went on, now trying to be as lighthearted and fun as possible. “Your brain,” he said, and paused, searching for something clever, “is like the surface of Mars, a red rocky place where scientists believe there is life” (he just couldn’t help himself, I guess), and then, in an attempt to be even more fun, said (poke) I’d almost (poke) wasted a case worth six (poke) thousand (poke) dollars (poke, poke, poke), and then he laughed and shook me as though we both knew the whole thing was a joke. I laughed, too. I try to laugh as much as possible.

When I got back to the tent, I spotted Phylida waving a seating card at me. The banquet had been divided into sections named after the countries of antiquity. We were in Flanders. Next over was Gaul, then Mesopotamia.

Phylida’s face was flushed deep bluish red as she gestured toward Sebastian. “We’ve been glugging too much.” Sleep deprivation combined with the many substances that swam inside her—she’d self-prescribed medications for everything from dry inner-eyelid-lining to mood swings to clenched jaw muscles—along with drinking a gallon of wine made her brain tilt slightly, causing her to combine or invent words. Sebastian held a stricken catlike pose. Then she left, having been assigned to Bavaria.

Appetizers arrived. The first speech, from Bob’s dad, began, and I felt a funny gurgle down inside me like a warm gastric balloon rising. From that moment on, each time someone stood up I experienced a slight cramping gut, kind of needing to poop, while assembling and abandoning thoughts for the toast I was about to give; I’d feel in my pocket for the notes I’d made on the plane in case my speech flopped.

I said to Phylida, “Can you see a mark on my forehead?” She shrugged, but I felt it; it stung where he’d doinked me.

She said, “I’m sunburned.” She put her hand on the bare skin above the scooped out back of her dress and made a red flash burn. Ouch. She’d sat out on the balcony at the height of the afternoon with Sebastian, bare-shouldered in her flimsy sundress, while I napped.

Bob’s brother made a toast.

A bird flew into the tent and got trapped. I seemed to be the only one who noticed. My colon felt distended. Dan, the guy with his own private jet was now standing at the microphone his glass raised. “They are today’s dream tomorrow’s hope.” It sounded like an illiterate campaign speech. But the toas that followed Dan’s was worse. I racke my brain to think of something to say. burped, and it smelled like an egg tha had gone bad.

Phylida pulled both shoulder strap of her dress down and put some ic from the butter dish on her neck. Whe I asked what was going on she said, “M wine's completely dranken. Drinken." She had a selective intelligence. She looked around. "We need the guy." I waved at him. Maybe it was simply the release after so much hard work at the hospital. Without the support of the shoulder straps, her tits suddenly fell down. "Hello," my girlfriend-slash-fiancée-slash-bulbheaded alien then said to the folks across from us. "I already got a hangover."

Why was everything starting to suck?

I studied Wayne's face, Bob's closest longtime buddy, as he carefully picked his way along Bob's first kiss in summer camp, their car accident in driver's ed, how glad but also sorry he was to see Bob getting hitched. Phylida was now sweating. I said, "What's wrong with you?"

She said, "When is this gonna end?" She said she'd slept four hours total since Wednesday (though that didn't count drooling all down her blouse on the airplane) and started telling me about the last patient she'd admitted this morning, a homeless guy. There's a certain kind of fungus that only grows on a person's anus, she said, and he had it. It eats skin. She gave me her saintly look of pain.

I said, "You knew this would be a late night," and she started to cry. She put her hand up to her throat and took her pulse and put the other hand in the middle of her chest.

She said, "I'm having an arrhythmic palpitation." Her kind of aortic problem had been fixed with surgery. This was only a murmur. She started tapping her cheek.

"What are you doing?"

"It's a test for hypocalcemia."

I said, "Call a taxi. Just go." She said she had to wait until I made my toast.

Niles was solemnly reading the exact figures of the andslide election Bob won running for seventh-grade class president when a woman at the table next to me looked over and sighed. I smiled back. I was next. At the far end of the ent guys were talking very loudly, moking cigarettes. The gay guys from he hotel balcony pressed by, saying ciao. t was almost eleven. People were croaking. We'd all travelled a long way today, own to this island, and we'd toasted and drunk. The woman introduced herself. She sat in Gaul and had to lean over because of the gap between tables.

I hadn't seen her before. I said, "You're a friend of Niloo's?" She said no. Her name was Anne. I said, "How do you know Bob?"

"He's a new friend."

"What does that mean?"

Leaning toward me caused the front of her dress to fall open. The tops of her tits were tanned and between her white satin bra cups was a tiny miniature bow the size of a snowflake, and I wondered if some person had tied that bow by hand. "Actually, I work for Gore."

I said, "Oh." She nodded. I said, "Is Al coming tomorrow?" She didn't know. Across the tent Niles was winding up. My gut bubbled. I said, "Are you going to hire Bob?"

She said, "We think he's amazing."

People had been saying that all night. I still couldn't figure out what they meant. "What do people see that makes him amazing?"

"His intelligence, his loyalty, his experience, his values." She had the serious determination of a nine-year-old girl burning army ants with a match.

"Yeah?"

"We admire his belief system."

Belief system? Based on what—liking people with money? Kissing Tipper's fat ass? The belief system in which he gorged himself on chicken tikka masala and then stood in the restaurant parking lot and stuck his finger down his throat and puked between the headlights of my car? The belief system that let him zip money into a certain fund during his last campaign from this other giant account ("A gift, really, from a very dear friend") out of which he paid himself?

"Oh," I said. "What belief system?"

Phylida, meanwhile, had woken up. I'm not sure how long she'd been staring at me. My future soulmate-slash-fever blister-slash-sleeping beauty had a string bean imprinted on her cheek. With her giant eyes and her pink face she looked like an unborn squirrel.

I said, "This is Anne."

Phylida said, "Did you enjoy looking down her dress?"

People cheered. Niles was done.

I took forever pushing between chairs to get to the spot with the mike. My legs felt like two thick rusty chains.

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I tested the microphone. There was now an audience, staring.

I took out the note in my pocket and silently read it. The night Bob phoned, in tears, about leading the polls. Hmm. I paused solemnly. Bob rose up in his chair. He had that stupid set to his eyes and mouth—picture Dan Rather—of always waiting to be looked at. I gazed over the crowd. What was I going to say? "Well—" The skin of my face felt like it had been stretched on a coat hanger in front of an oven. The next line on the piece of paper said, "Story about landlady." I thought for a second. It was something about a pizza box catching fire on the stove.

I cleared my throat. My legs: heavy. My face: hot. I thought of F.D.R., the onset of polio. I sputtered. "You've had a lot of jobs, Bob." I really should've read this over on the plane.

"Quite a few." I couldn't speak. "Big jobs." There's no funny or clever metaphor for what I was failing to do up here. "In fact, quite a few big jobs." I was already dying. I should've figured I'd flip out and written down every word. I wanted to sit. I clenched my ass up and tried to go forward. "You're smart." I couldn't breathe. "Very smart." My small lungs shot puffs of white gas—performance anxiety. "An incredible guy." The people closest to me looked at me as if an asteroid was coming over my shoulder and was about to crush them. "Unfortunately I'm blanking on some of your successes." A couple of the smokers were laughing. Well, wouldn't you? "I'm sure they'll come to me in a moment." I reached down and quietly drank an entire glass of water. "Why couldn't I have been at some loser's wedding now?" I said to myself, out loud, into the microphone. "I wouldn't have to remember so much." Bob's head looked like a fire engine, his nostrils flaring. Niloo was grinning. "Can't you stop and give somebody else a chance, for Christ's sake?" I put the glass down and gripped the mike stand. I'm going to faint, I thought. No. I'm going to explode from my bowels. And then I'll faint.

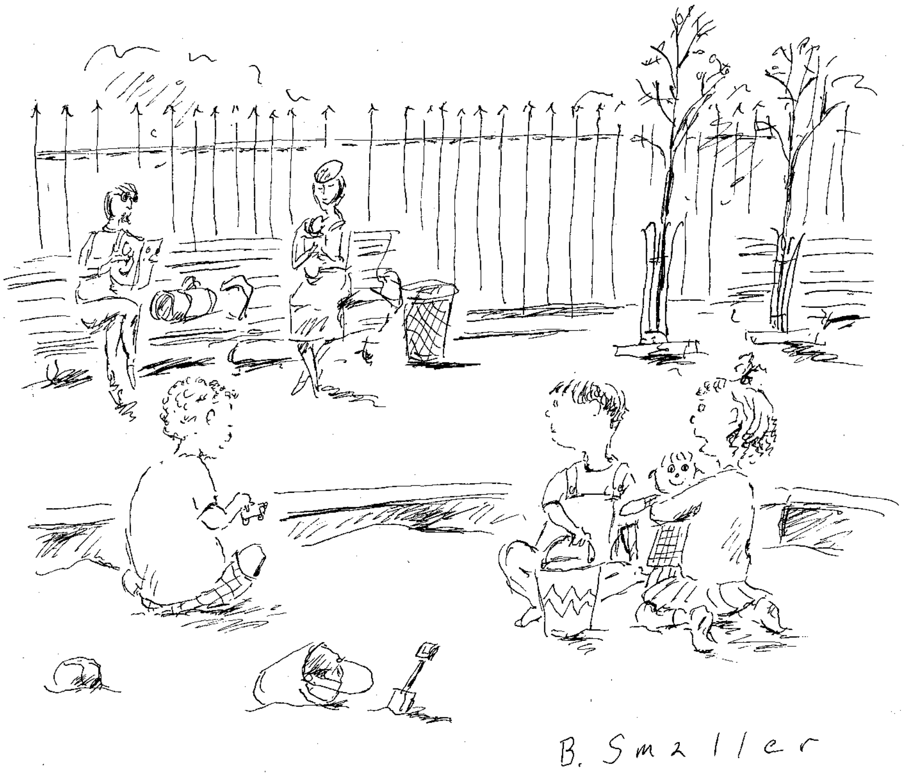
It began as a queasy chuckle or two, and suddenly became a wave. The entire room erupted in laughter. In fact they'd been laughing for a while. All night everyone had been dying just to crack a smile—the natural tendency is to want to laugh at events like this—but no one had given them a chance. Now they had me: the buffoon. What the hell?

"Anyway, standing up here talking to you," I said, feeling a little more confident suddenly, "is actually the most time we've spent together in a year and a half, you big pain in the ass." They roared like a beer-hall crowd and I found myself remembering Bob's working his cell phone earlier in the night, and I pictured shoving it down his throat with a toilet plunger. The smokers had joined in, they were yelling at Bob now, one called him a pain in the ass. I stepped forward, trying to keep the momentum. "After Bob moves to the Oval Office," I said, pointing at them, "he'll send you guys some interns." More yucks; far out of proportion to the dopiness of the joke. I raised my right hand and in a lame Clinton drawl said, "I, Bob, solemnly swear to set aside interns who can suck a bowling ball through a crazy straw for my dearest former roommate." Niloo had leaned into Bob's shoulder, her face was twisted frozen as she cracked up. I made one of those fists politicians use when they're trying to be emphatic. Niloo couldn't control herself. I said, "Is this funny to you, Niloo? Do you know what you're in for?" Her face was crimped and she was sort of nodding. "Can I give you some advice?" I paused—why had I been screaming?—and continued, quietly this time. "Stand up and start running and never look back."

I began shaking my head cornily. "You're a nice person, Niloo. It's such a shame." More hilarity, a monsoon. "But if you're going to live your life together"—I started doing a bad L.B.J., televangelist Southern idiot—"you must never stand directly in front of him after he has eaten a large meal. It is very dangerous. And do not worry your pretty self about his latest diet, O.K.?" I made a puking, retching motion. "Don't be surprised if he sticks his finger down his throat and throws up all over your car." I took a breath and pointed at him. "I don't know if anybody told you, Bob vomiting and diarrhea are not the bes answer to weight gain." I was on auto pilot. "Try Richard Simmons' 'Sweatin to the Oldies.' " I did a little dance move. One guy slipped out of his chai and a waiter had to dodge him. Bob was staring at me, immobile, his larg mind turning.

Bob wasn't going to be introducin me to Al Gore tomorrow.

Back in Flanders, Phylida bent ove and the people seated by her sudden



"He doesn't have to worry about his preschool placement—he interviews well."

jumped backward out of their chairs. Phylida, I realized, had either just puked or had knocked something over or had fallen comatose onto the ground. That's my woman. I was marrying Drankenstein. I was the Bride of Drankenstein. What a wonderful couple we'd make. How pleasing to the eye and ear. What a future we had. Phylida reared her head after a moment, eyeballs rolling high into her forehead, with her sweaty brown-rooted old hair plastered against it, and I imagined my being up here again—next year? the summer after?—toasting her at our own wedding, and I thought: I might as well kill myself. "Bob," I said, and waited for his expression to change. No change. He was looking at me like I was a stain on your carpet that you scrubbed and it got worse. Ah, what the hell. I raised my empty glass and the place got silent. "How come you never call me back anymore, you fat, pusillanimous, popcorn-eating, obsequious, spermy, ass-licking, whoring, curry-barfing lackey?"

Had I gone too far?

"That," Phylida said, looking up at me when I returned to the table, her face gaunt and sculpted, "was a disaster."

I said, "It was fine. We can go now."

BACK at the hotel, Phylida pulled her dress up over her head and threw it in the corner under the desk, kicked her shoes off and pulled down her nylons and sat on the edge of the bed in her underwear, groaning. Even hunched over like that, there wasn't a blip of fat on her. She put on her little spaghetti-strap camisole. I stared at her: narrow torso, strong shoulders, long neck. She looked like she was made out of rubber. I waited for her to look at me. "Are you gonna go right to sleep?" I said.

I was trying to be nice, trying not to want her. The night's debacle had left me charged. Why was her arm skin so soft? We were here together in this perfect glimpse of unreal time in a fancy hotel. I looked at her and she yawned. "I'm going to bed." My dick, of course, was hard. Not like that egg-yolk dick from earlier today. It now lay in my pants like a stunned fish. I loved her so much I couldn't think. I loved her because I was horny. I was horny because was sad, because the night could not have been more awful, because it was almost over. I thought back to that shocked look on Bob's face during my toast, the crowd laughing all around him.

She lay on her side, the table lamp on beside her. I saw that damned chin hair still, and the curving line down to her hollow waist and up the bump over her hip that's so unbelievably beautiful it proves God's a perverted ass freak. I kissed her bare white inner forearm again and again.

"Please," she said, "I just want to go to bed." I said I could understand that. She thanked me sweetly. I realized that she was exactly what I wanted in a woman: sparkling eyes, springy hindquarters, the ability to save her own life. I felt for her then what I feel now, and knew without thinking anymore that we'd made it. Her nude hip was staring me in the face. I touched her unburned parts and she smiled. How could she stand me after tonight? We struggled to find a way I could hold her, and then it seemed we both were breathing harder.

I was unclothed and her skin burned against me. She turned onto her stomach—I was above her, as careful as I could be—we found this to be the only angle. With her burns and loveliness and all, she pulled me in. I felt like a giant fishhook and I had her on the line and we were both rocking. I was like the Fonz with my dick right then. I tried not to touch anything except her peachy, scrumptious, pillowy ass, but we were grinding and eventually I knew I was rubbing against the burned spots. She'd got ridden down into the bedspread and it must've felt like sandpaper against her burns but she said nothing, making sweet painful noises and lying low and going with it.

Afterward we ate the apples we'd brought for the plane. We found a movie on TV about a princess riding a motorcycle. The next morning we checked out of that place and drove across the island to a motel—it smelled of Ajax and mildew and had a Jacuzzi in the kitchen. I knew I would miss this great event, with no way of predicting who might've flown in by now. J.F.K., Jr.? Marlon Brando riding a llama? I didn't feel like I should be at one place or the other. It didn't feel like a lateral move. It felt good. We ordered crab sandwiches from town and had them delivered to the room. We had a party. ♦

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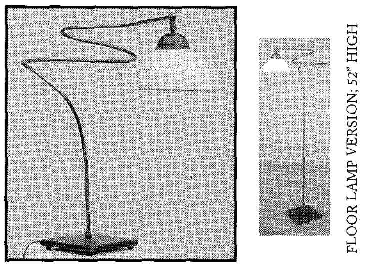

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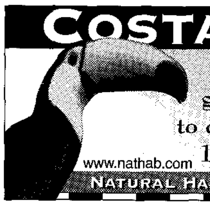

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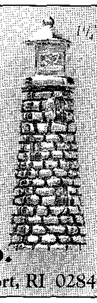

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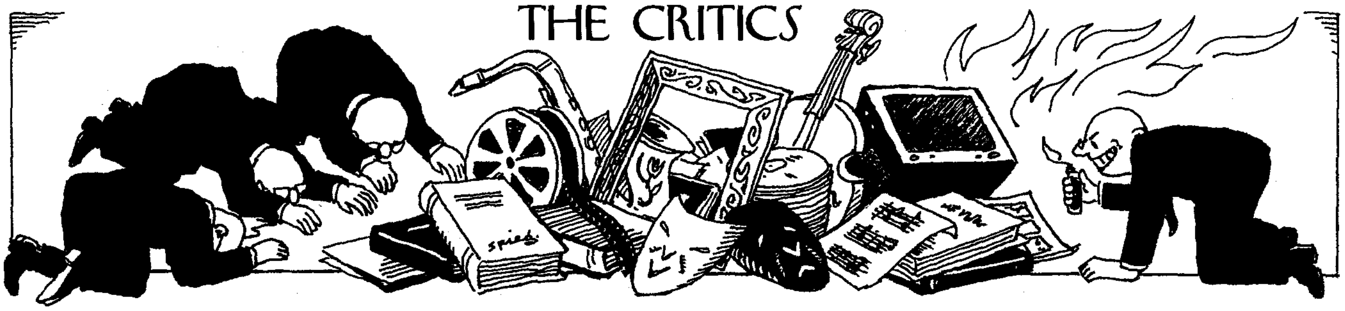


A CRITIC AT LARGE

MAGNUM OPUS

At E. B. White's centennial, Charlotte spins on.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

TOWARD the end of her not long but certainly brave, sensible, inventive, and distinguished life, the heroine of E. B. White's "Charlotte's Web" responds to a question from her friend and protégé Wilbur the pig. He has noticed that she has painstakingly made, in a high corner of his pen, a round fuzzy object, and asks, "Is it a plaything?" She responds:

> "Plaything? I should say not. It is my egg sac, my *magnum opus*."
>
> "I don't know what a magnum opus is," said Wilbur.
>
> "That's Latin," explained Charlotte. "It means 'great work.' This egg sac is my great work—the finest thing I have ever made."

Her egg sac, in the fullness of time, releases five hundred and fourteen tiny spiders, all but three of whom float away on balloons of silk let loose from their spinnerets, to add to the world's arachnid population; White's book, in the fullness of time, sold more than ten million copies and was translated into more than twenty languages. Scott Elledge's 1984 biography of White states, "For the last twenty years in America, 'Charlotte's Web' has outsold 'Winnie the Pooh,' any single Mary Poppins book, 'The Wind in the Willows,' 'The Little Prince,' and 'Alice in Wonderland.' " A 1976 *Publisher's Weekly* poll, of teachers and librarians and other word folk, to determine the ten best children's books written in America since 1776, placed "Charlotte's Web" first. A century after White's birth, in 1899, it would seem to be the book, of his fifteen or so, most certain to carry his reputation, via the buoyant strands of renewed readership, into the next millennium.

Who would have predicted this in 1952, when his tale of talking barnyard animals was first published? White at the time was fifty-three, widely esteemed as a poetic humorist, an incomparably graceful and pungent essayist, and the mainstay of this magazine—the pure yet grave, light yet piercing voice sounding above all its other gathered weekly voices. As far back as 1926, Harold Ross had recognized that voice as the one his new magazine needed; Ross clung with all the devices at an editor's command (money, love, guilt-inducement) to his sometimes wriggling prize. Ralph Ingersoll, the managing editor in *The New Yorker's* early years, once said, "I can't remember a piece by anyone but E. B. White that Ross ever really thought just right. White was the exception to prove his lack of faith in everyone else." Yet the young writer was prone to sudden flights from the offices where he was the indispensable editorialist (in Notes and Comment) and "newsbreaks" commentator, as well as contributor of "casuals" (humorous pieces and fiction), versifier, cartoon-caption fine-tuner, and general inspirator. In 1929, having left New York City for Camp Otter, in Ontario, where he had worked for two happy summers, in 1920 and 1921, he wrote Ross:

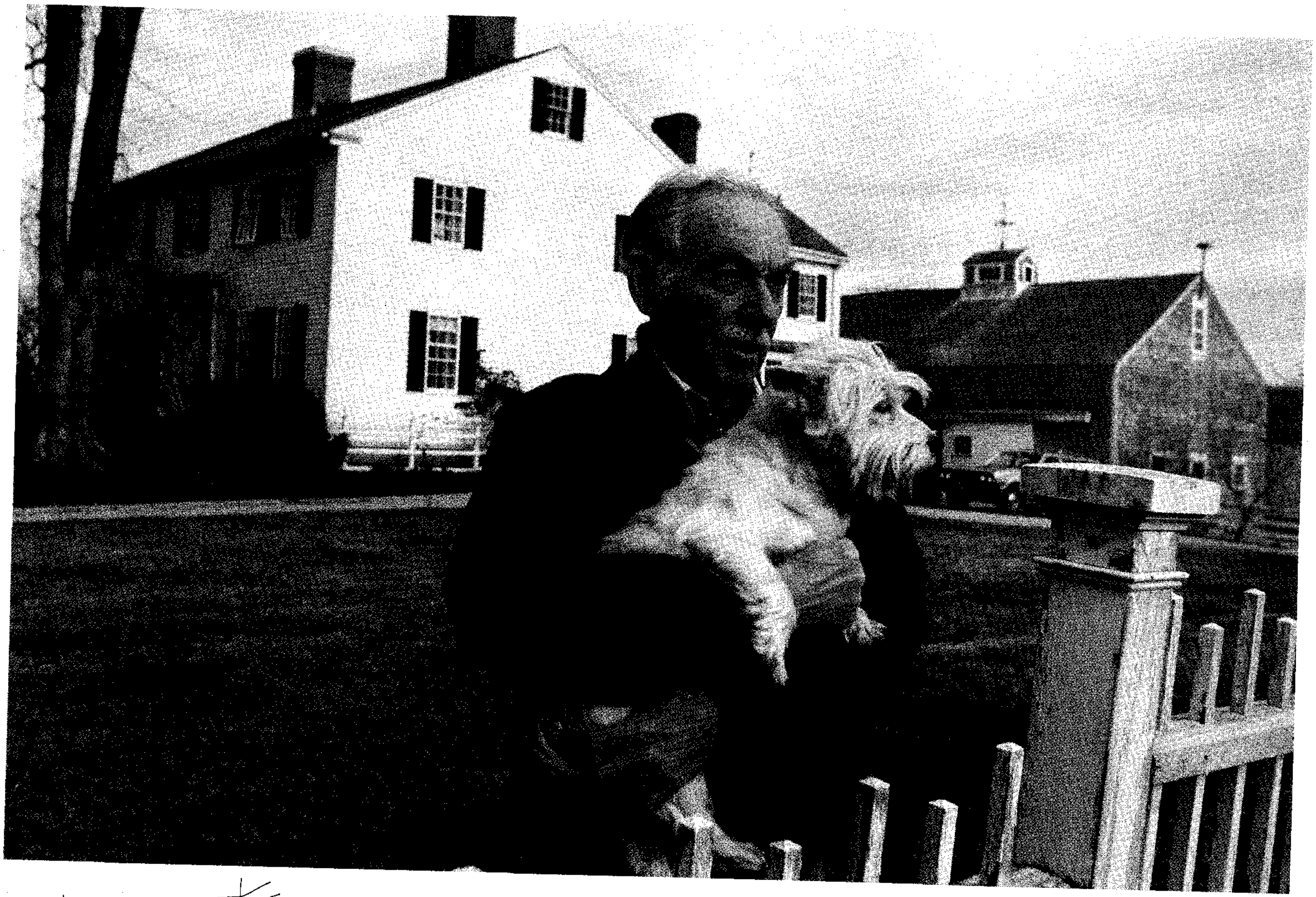
> Next to yourself and maybe one or two others, I probably have as tender a feeling for your magazine as anybody. For me it isn't a complete life, though, and that's one reason why returning to this place . . . has been such a satisfying experience. . . . The fellow that I first came here with is now running the camp, and we're working on a plan for going in business together.

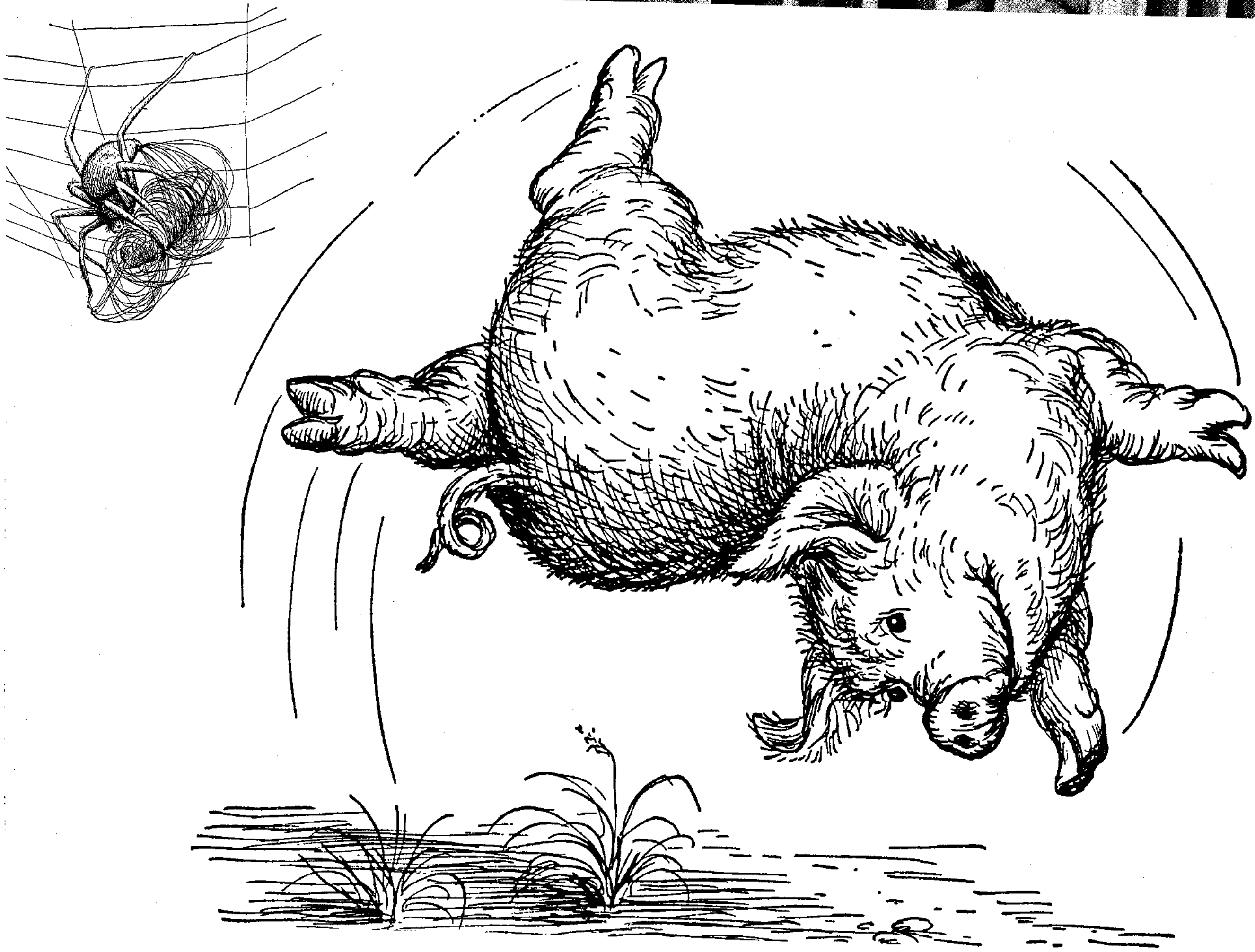
That same truant summer, another *New Yorker* mainstay, the editor Katharine Sergeant Angell, was in Reno getting a divorce. Entertaining some prospects of marrying White, she wrote him, as woman and editor, a letter of remarkable acumen and seductiveness, which read in part:

> You say you're a failure at the writing racket and that you could be contented in your present job if you didn't mind being just a hack. . . . You feel that in thirty years you haven't produced a really important book, poem or piece of prose—Most people haven't by then. It seems to me, though, that you are preeminently a writer—everything you do has a certain perfection that is rare. . . . For you to give up writing now would be like a violinist so good that he could always be the Concert Master of one of the four or five leading orchestras of the world, giving up fiddling because he couldn't be Heifetz. Perhaps you'll never be a Heifetz, perhaps you will. . . . But it doesn't seem sensible for a concert master to throw over music, the thing he most loved in the world, because he can't be Heifetz.

In the event, White returned to the magazine, married Mrs. Angell, and continued in concertmaster harness, though with conspicuous restlessness and chafing. He moved her, himself, and their son, Joel, to Maine in the thirties, came back to New York in the forties, and went to Maine for good in the fifties, twice throwing a spanner into her career as editor. While still contributing to *The New Yorker*, and ennobling the modest newsbreaks with his genius, he had a tricky way of doing some of his best and frees work away from the magazine's Ross-run pages: the essays of "One Man' Meat" appeared, but for a few, as monthly column in *Harper's* from 193 to 1943, and the perennially fresh trib

Literary circle: White with his terrier, Susie (above, at his Maine farm), and famous friends Wilbur and Charlotte.





"I'm afraid you'll never know if this was for the speeding or for the Celine Dion tape, sir."

• •

ute "Here Is New York" was done for *Holiday,* in 1948.

He was both a natural and a reluctant writer. A letter to his brother Stanley in 1947 says, "I can remember, really quite distinctly, looking a sheet of paper square in the eyes when I was seven or eight years old and thinking 'This is where I belong, this is it.'" To a college student he confided in 1963, "I was a writing fool when I was eleven years old and have been tapering off ever since." In 1945, he claimed in a note to Ross, "I am not as sure of myself as I used to be, and write rather timidly, staring at each word as it comes out, and wondering what is wrong with *it.*" In a 1949 Notes and Comment, he wrote:

> The thought of writing hangs over our mind like an ugly cloud, making us apprehensive and depressed, as before a summer storm, so that we begin the day by subsiding after breakfast, or by going away, often to seedy and inconclusive destinations: the nearest zoo, or a branch post office to buy a few stamped envelopes. Our professional life has been a long, shameless exercise in avoidance. . . . Yet the record is there. Not even lying down and closing the blinds stops us from writing; not even our family, and our preoccupation with same, stops us. We have never counted the words, but we estimated them once and the estimate was staggering.

He had high standards, fretful health, dazzling success at magazine work, and a hankering for a vague but majestic magnum opus. In 1937, he attempted to take time off, not only from *The New Yorker* but from his wife and son, to write a long poem; what came of it was his longest and strangest piece of self-description, "Zoo Revisited: Or the Life and Death of Olie Hackstaff." The poem, which imitates "The Waste Land" in its refrains, chantlike short lines, and pervasive anomie, waited seventeen years before White published it, in "The Second Tree from the Corner," whose title story is another rendering of a nibbling, disorienting, unshakable unease: "The dizziness in the streets, the constricting pain in the back of the neck, the apprehensions, the tightness of the scalp, the inability to concentrate, the despondency and the melancholy times, the feeling of pressure and tension, the anger at not being able to work, the anxiety over work not done, the gas on the stomach." The same collection holds "The Door," a piece of humor that skids off into dread: its central image is of rats that "the Professor had driven crazy by forcing them to deal with problems which were beyond the scope of rats, the insoluble problems." For a while, various doors marked with the signs of religion, commerce, and sex open when the ratlike hero jumps at them, but then they suddenly refuse to give, and the ache in the head is so great that the solution seems to be surgical removal of the prefrontal lobe:

> It only means a whiff of ether, a few deft strokes, and the higher animal becomes a little easier in his mind and more like the lower one. From now on, you see, that's the way it will be, the ones with the small prefrontal lobes will win because the other ones are hurt too much by this incessant bumping.

The ease of being a simple animal powerfully attracted White. His idyllic (as he recalled it) boyhood was rich in pets and vacations among wildlife; when he transplanted himself to Maine, he filled the barn with domestic animals. From the civilized discontent of being a humanoid tortured rat, it was a short hop to being a footloose humanoid mouse—Stuart Little. In the late twenties, while sleeping in a Pullman upper berth, White had dreamed of "a small character who had the features of a mouse, was nicely dressed, courageous, and questing." To entertain his eighteen nephews and nieces, he made up episodes about this plucky little dream mouse and wrote them down; having tried and failed to find a publisher, he took his "rejected child" to Maine. Returning to New York seven years later, in the winter of 1944-45, he was, by his account, "almost sure I was about to die, my head felt so queer." In order "to ease the lot of my poor widow," he completed "Stuart Little," before going to San Francisco to witness the birth of the United Nations, in his new role as editorialist for world government. The gynecological horror of a woman (Mrs. Frederick C. Little) giving birth to a mouse appalled some librarians and teachers, and White was compelled to fudge the freak by maintaining that Stuart is just "a small guy who *looks* very much like a mouse." Stuart meets the challenge of his smallness with a verve and bonhomie that have enchanted children nevertheless. The mouse-boy-guy character and his adventures emerge from a dreamy nest of sublimations—White had described his ailments of this period as "mice in the subconscious and spurs in the cervical spine"—and there is something fey and disconnected about the series of episodes that prevent it, for all its charm and oblique autobiography, from being the desired magnum opus. But White had found the one way, apparently, in which he could write a novel: by writing it as a children's book.

"CHARLOTTE'S WEB" was honored in 1994, with "The Annotate Charlotte's Web," a wide-format editio in which the text, studded with gree footnotes, is accompanied by many elucidatory comments in the same leaf tint by Peter F. Neumeyer, a teacher an critic and children's-book author. Neumeyer included as appendices testimon by Garth Williams, the story's excelle illustrator, and samples of White's con siderable research on spiders, and selections from relevant letters and writings, and, most valuably, an accounting, with quotations and reproduced pages, of the eight (at least) drafts whereby White revised "Charlotte's Web" into its splendid final state.

The book first entered White's correspondence in October of 1949, when he told Cass Canfield, the head of Harper & Brothers, "My next book is in sight. I look at it every day. I keep it in a carton as you would a kitten." That summer, he had written his most fervent literary essay, a strikingly empathetic foreword for Don Marquis's "archy and mehitabel"—vers libre by the "unsatisfied" and "gloomy" newspaper columnist Marquis featuring a raffish cat who is "*toujours gai*" and a cockroach who writes by diving head first onto a typewriter keyboard, one key at a time. Shades of the head-bumping rat, and of a tiny literate critter to come! Another of White's finest short works, the essay "Death of a Pig," had been written the previous year. That pig, unnamed but vividly personified, had been killed by disease before the autumn butchering scheduled for it. White was troubled, he wrote in a brief essay, "Pigs and Spiders," by the "double-dealing" of pig husbandry: "The theme of *Charlotte's Web* is that a pig shall be saved, and I have an idea that somewhere deep inside me there was a wish to that effect." To one of the book's many readers he wrote:

> The idea . . . came to me one day when I was on my way down through the orchard carrying a pail of slops to my pig. I had made up my mind to write a children's book about animals, and I needed a way to save a pig's life, and I had been watching a large pider in the backhouse, and what with one hing and another, the idea came to me.

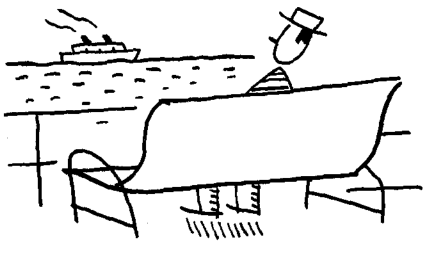
He finished a draft in January of 1951, but on the first of March he wrote o the Harper's children's-book editor, Ursula Nordstrom, "I've recently nished another children's book, but ave put it away for a while to ripen (let he body heat go out of it). It doesn't atisfy me the way it is and I think ventually I shall rewrite it pretty much, in order to shift the emphasis nd make other reforms." He spelled ut those reforms when he donated he manuscripts to Cornell, in 1961:

> I added five chapters, starting the narrave with the birth of the pig on the John rable farm and giving the little girl a more important place in the story. The book was published during the following year, [October 15] 1952.

"From the evidence," White later wrote, "I had as much trouble getting off the ground as did the Wright Brothers." His first starts had a flavor of the faux-naïve: "Charlotte was a big gray spider"; "I shall speak first of Wilbur"; "The best part of Zuckerman's barn was the part underneath where the cows were on the south side." The narrative, centered on the home base of his happiness, the Maine farm, had tendencies toward the rapturous which White's revisions sought to curb with concreteness and specificity. He began again: "At midnight, John Arable pulled his boots on, lit a lantern, and walked out through the woods to the hog house." Having introduced a human character ahead of the pig, spider, or barn, he finally arrived at the riveting first sentence:

> "Where's Papa going with that ax?" said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast.

The four Arables are introduced in a rapid tumble of dialogue. Eight-year-old Fern rises against her father, who is on his way to slay the runt pig of a new litter, with the cry "The pig couldn't help being born small, could it? If *I* had been very small at birth, would you have killed *me*?" Mr. Arable tries to explain the difference between human beings and animals, but it doesn't wash, with Fern or with us readers, and we are off on an earthy barnyard saga where not only do animals talk but a spider lectures in polysyllables and spells out words in her web. The first chapter also brings us Garth Williams's gorgeous drawing of Fern nursing the tiny pig. After the second chapter ("Fern loved Wilbur more than anything," it begins), the reader is ready to be told, at the beginning of Chapter 3, "The barn was very large. It was very old. It smelled of hay and it smelled of manure," and to endorse the paean to natural reality, death and manure and all, that is White's overriding intent. To a reader he avowed, "All that I hope to say in books, all that I ever hope to say, is that I love the world." The masterstroke of the final revision—the perfectionist's delay of 1951—was to mediate this love through a female child.



Fern is not just the initiator of the tale of Wilbur and Charlotte; she is its witness and, in a sense, its imaginer. Neumeyer points out that, although she reports the barnyard animals' conversations to her mother, she never takes part in them, sitting silently on her milk stool in the barn cellar. Her human consciousness somehow enables the drama that the animals live out, even though they live it to a conclusion after her attention has wandered toward boys, in the person of Henry Fussy, and the world beyond the barn, represented by the bright lights and Ferris wheel of the County Fair. White is present twice in this book: as Fern, the interested witness, and as Charlotte, the persistent, ingenious, heroic, mortal writer. He is even present, in his most innocent and world-loving form, as the id-pig Wilbur, who finds in a gray spider a mother who will arrange for him not to die. White had achieved the connection he had defined in a letter of 1956: "The whole problem is to establish communication with one's self."

A boy intermediary would not have done, as we can see from the boisterous, loutish behavior of Fern's brother Avery. Olie Hackstaff, in that would-be magnum opus "Zoo Revisited," is sullied by sexual curiosity and harried by the puritanical admonition "*Don't put your mouth on that dirty old rail!*" "Charlotte's Web" was White's way of putting his mouth on that dirty old rail, the rural fence rail and the knotty, splintery rail of life. Charlotte, in her valedictory to Wilbur, says, "After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little while, we die. A spider's life can't help being something of a mess, with all this trapping and eating flies." The novel is not just about death, which ends our contact with "this lovely world, these precious days," but about the messy nexus of living and killing and eating which sustains us and all creatures in our "sweet, sweet, sweet interlude." Food in its disgusting deliciousness is repeatedly anatomized. One of Wilbur's meals is specified as "skim milk, wheat middlings, leftover pancakes, half a doughnut, the rind of a summer squash, two pieces of stale toast, a third of a gingersnap, a fish tail, one orange peel, several noodles from a noodle soup, the scum off a cup of cocoa, an ancient jelly roll, a strip of paper from the lining of the garbage pail, and a spoonful of raspberry jello." When the rat Templeton, the plot's sneering, amoral factotum, has to be persuaded to come to the County Fair, it is with visions of edible trash. An eloquent old sheep assures him:

> In the trampled grass of the infield you will find old discarded lunch boxes containing the foul remains of peanut butter sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, cracker crumbs, bits of doughnuts, and particles of cheese. In the hard-packed dirt of the midway, after the glaring lights are out and the people have gone home to bed, you will find a veritable treasure of popcorn fragments, frozen custard dribblings, candied apples abandoned by tired children, sugar fluff crystals, salted almonds, popsicles, partially gnawed ice cream cones, and the wooden sticks of lollypops. Everywhere is loot for a rat—in tents, in booths, in haylofts—why, a fair has enough disgusting leftover food to satisfy a whole army of rats.

The catalogue is Joycean in its exhaustiveness, its willingness to stand as metaphor for the whole farraginous world. The worried, frustrated rat of "The Door" has become the triumphantly replete, stoical Templeton, who, when asked to help Charlotte save Wilbur's life, snarls, "Let him die. I should worry," and, when warned by an old sheep that he is gorging himself to death, sneers, "Who wants to live forever?" The anxious, exquisite paragrapher and contriver of casuals becomes, for the hundred and eighty-four pages of "Charlotte's Web," a Heifetz of easy, fearless compass, master of country truths, singer of the harsh and beautiful nature that is.

With some few omissions. We do not meet the father of the five hundred and fourteen baby spiders, nor does the mother discuss him. And one of Neumeyer's sidelights concerns the illustration of Charlotte herself, in which White, who had a good graphic sense, took an active hand. Originally, Garth Williams attempted to give her a face, the face of a woman, and she was (in White's words) "horrible and would have wrecked the book." He advised Williams, through the Harper editors, that "spiders don't have much of any face—in fact they have hardly any head" and suggested that the eight long, many-jointed legs "offer a great chance for ballet treatment." When Williams drew Charlotte thinking, head down, White himself, according to the artist, "put two dots on the edge of her face" (for eyes) and "put 3 strokes to suggest hair on the top of her head." A real spider has eight eyes and two big fangs, as a number of illustrations consulted by White and included in an appendix repulsively show. Murder and manure could make it into the nature of "Charlotte's Web," but not merciless sideways fangs. Also, Neumeyer brings us among his annotations one that caused him, he confesses, "amazement." The magnum opus's last words—"It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both"—were closely anticipated in a letter that Katharine White wrote, in 1943, to a woman who had attacked White in a letter to the *Times:* "They are not words that should be applied to anyone who is an honest man and an honest writer. Andy is both." What can one make of this convergence? A subconscious echo? A joint approach to a Jungian archetype of phraseology? Or a sly and fond marital in-joke? I vote for the last, in which White, ever modest, transferred his wife's homage to his good gray heroine—transferred it but kept it, for in a poem, "Natural History," addressed to Katharine from Toronto in 1929, he had already identified himself as a spider:

Thus I, gone forth, as spiders do,
In spider's web a truth discerning,
Attach one silken strand to you
For my returning. ♦

BOOKS

HELP YOURSELF

What city girls want.

BY REBECCA MEAD

BRIDGET JONES. Well, that's out of the way.

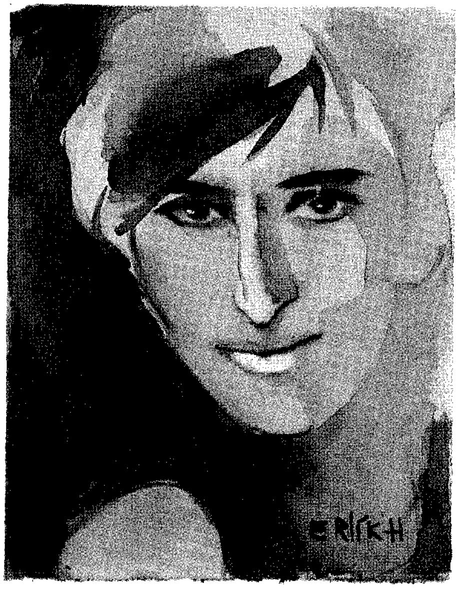
Anybody who writes about Melissa Bank's new book, "The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing," without mentioning Helen Fielding's best-seller of last summer is doing so just to be contrary, and should not be trusted. Bank's book is, like Fielding's, a chronicle of the love life of a youngish, single, urban professional woman, written by a youngish, single, urban professional woman. Also like "Bridget Jones's Diary," it is published by Viking Penguin, which is happily promoting the comparison: Fielding and Bank did a double act at the 92nd Street Y this summer, discussing the question "What do single girls want?" (besides the obvious—a big book advance). But the comparison doesn't really do justice to "Girls' Guide." Fielding's novel was a satirical, one-joke stunt; Bank's is a far more subtle piece of work, which achieves even more than it aims to.

Less a novel than a gesture in the direction of a novel, "Girls' Guide" concerns Jane Rosenal, a drudged associate editor at a New York publishing house that is identified only as H——, like a minor character in a Victorian classic. "Girls' Guide" comprises seven chapters, each of which can be read as a freestanding story but which together more or less cohere as a single narrative, if the reader is prepared to connect a few dots. It charts Jane's passage through the essential developmental stages of contemporary womanhood: from her recalcitrant adolescence—required to contribute to a museum visitors' book, she writes, "Bored nearly to death"—to a relationship with a callow young man who woos her with that line about how he's monogamous by nature, and on to the obligatory affair with an older man. In Jane's case, this is with a celebrated editor, who when she complains that a friend of his treats her dismissively as "the blurry young person sitting across the table" tells her fondly "You are a blurry young person."

The book's momentum derives les from forward progress of plot than from a circular elaboration upon a theme: th discovery of love in modern life. In spit of the self-helpy title, Jane's task is no to figure out how to catch a man—twice, suitors offer her engagemen rings, a rate well above the Manhatta average, and one that hardly suggest she suffers from a deficiency in the a lure department. Rather, her task is t recognize whether the men she ha caught are worth holding on to: *N usually* is the wholly plausible answe

In the first story, the fourteen-yea old Jane watches, with fascination ar puzzlement, her older brother's metamorphosis into something approximating manhood when he brings his first serious girlfriend to the family's summer home. In the second, Jane, now in her twenties, is dating a man who is still conducting what looks like a flirtation with an ex-girlfriend. When Jane's brother informs her that even the best of men will be attracted to other women, her response is "I hear this as another fact I am too old not to know. More proof of how unprepared I am to love someone." In further stories, Jane, by now a struggling would-be editor whose boss patronizes her with cast-off manuscripts and lipsticks, meets and moves in with Archie Knox, an editor at K—, who is twenty-eight years her senior. In this, the central love affair of Jane's life thus far, Bank perfectly captures the erotic lure of the role of protégée: Jane happily submits to being schooled by Archie, yet, almost without knowing it, masters him with the sexual power of her youth. And Bank conveys with equal skill the poignant and intractable imbalance between them: when Archie tells ane that she has "grown up," Jane says, 'It felt good to hear it. I thought maybe e was right. Then it occurred to me hat if I really had grown up I wouldn't vant to be told."

Jane's final incarnation, in the chap- er that gives the volume its name, is as sheepish consumer of a book about ow to snag a man. Here Bank pro- uces a clever fantasia, inspired by "The ules," the 1996 best-selling retro how- o, in which the book's two authors nter Jane's imagination and intrude pon her thoughts. They offer un- ought advice—"Don't say 'I love you' rst! Wear your hair long! Don't bring o marriage!"—like a pair of guardian ntas. But "The Rules" is almost too ght a phenomenon to bear the weight Bank's thoughtful interrogation, and ne, on the evidence of her behavior in the preceding chapters, does not fit the stereotype of the "Rules" girl, one who believes that her happiness lies in a marriage achieved through covert predation. Jane is portrayed as more perplexed by love affairs, and wary of their snares, than she is purposeful about leveraging them into matrimony.



Melissa Bank

Jane has all the usual accessories of a woman of her class and age in New York City: the shrink, who she hopes will tell her she's better and needn't come anymore ("That same day your dry cleaner will recommend hand washing," the "Rules" women scold her); the best friend who one day meets her match and is beamed into the alternate universe of married people; the boyfriend with commitment issues, who takes her to Paris for her birthday but fails to come through with the anticipated—and intended—proposal. But, unlike some single-girl authors, who have adopted the perspective, if not the methods, of "The Rules" in depicting their unmarried protagonists as pitifully lacking, Bank does not play these components of Jane's life for laughs, or sneers. There's no contempt on the part of the author for her character's single status; nor is Jane filled with self-loathing. Both Melissa Bank and Jane Rosenal seem to recognize that salvation may lie not in the self-help section of the bookstore but in the knowledge that comes from conducting a series of love affairs, even when the odds are that each will end painfully. At one point, Bank's heroine describes the aftermath of a broken romance as experienced on the therapist's couch: "You talk and talk, waiting for the cure. After a while, though, it occurs to you that even a perfect understanding of failed love is the booby prize." Well, perhaps; but that kind of wisdom is a booby prize worth its weight in gold wedding bands. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

HERE IS NEW YORK, by E. B. White, with a new introduction, by Roger Angell (The Little Bookroom; $16.95). "Summertime is a good time to reëxamine New York and to receive again the gift of privacy, the jewel of loneliness." White wrote this fifty-one years ago, in a stifling hotel room in midtown Manhattan. He was living in Maine, but he had been commissioned by his stepson, Roger Angell—then an editor at *Holiday*—to write a piece about his former home, and the result was an essay both nostalgic and prescient. The laundry lines above Rivington Street and the Queen Mary's mournful horn may be long gone, but White's New York is still with us: "It carries on its lapel the unexpungeable odor of the long past, so that no matter where you sit . . . you feel the vibrations of great times and tall deeds, of queer people and events and undertakings."

LEGACY: A BIOGRAPHY OF MOSES AND WALTER ANNENBERG, by Christopher Ogden (Little, Brown; $29.95). In this dual biography, Ogden recounts the dramatic beginnings of an improbable dynasty. Moses Annenberg, a self-made millionaire and a very rough diamond, was jailed for tax evasion in 1940 and dead of a brain tumor in 1942. He left his pampered son, Walter, a severely depleted fortune and the responsibility of supporting his mother and his seven sisters. The unpromising heir paid off debts, rebuilt the family's holdings—his art collection, willed to the Metropolitan Museum, is valued at a billion dollars—served as Ambassador to Great Britain, and is one of the country's most notable philanthropists.

THE MIRACLE OF CASTEL DI SANGRO, by Joe McGinniss (Little, Brown; $25). Shortly after turning fifty, McGinniss went soccer-mad and travelled to Italy to chronicle the fortunes of a ragtag team from Castel di Sangro, which had improbably ascended to the country's second-tier league. The team's talent is questionable; the owner appears to be a Mafia boss; one of the players is arrested for cocaine trafficking. But McGinniss is in love, and his good-humored acknowledgment of the absurdity of his passion still can't prevent the pain of heartbreak. "In Italy, no higher compliment can be paid to an event or live performance of any kind than to say that it was like a movie," he writes, and his story plays like a Roberto Benigni tragic farce.

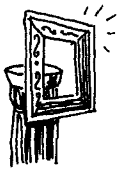
IN THE GROOVE, by Eric Kohler (Chronicle; $18.95). During the post-Swing record boom of the forties and fifties, young illustrators with a love of jazz, pop, and classical music invented the ultimate dream job: designing album covers for the likes of Xavier Cugat, Harry Owens and his Royal Hawaiians, and the Andre Kostelanetz orchestra. This arresting guide includes the best work of such designers as Alex Steinweiss, who was the first to put art on both 78s and LPs; the frenetic, Rivera-inspired Jim Flora; and Erik Nitsche, who brought cool Swiss design to record jackets before the onslaught of rock and roll.

AT THE MUSEUMS

FAST, CHEAP, AND OUT OF CONTROL

Pop trash and celebrity madness are nothing new.

BY KURT ANDERSEN



THE big difference between museums of modern art and museums of ancient art is that most of the objects exhibited in the latter were not created as art at all but, rather, as baubles, tools, fetish objects—the eons-old equivalents of Beanie Babies and PalmPilots and Leonardo DiCaprio posters. Only in distant retrospect, millennia later, do the ancient Egyptian game boards and alabaster headrests at the Met, for instance, inspire the sort of reverential, this-is-art hush we grant reflexively to a painting by Rothko or Kiefer.

Now, at the end of the century during which Duchamp and his Pop descendants turned mass-market flotsam into art, the Museum of Modern Art is putting mass-market flotsam on display, American ephemera, unmediated by modern artists' ironic abracadabra. "Fame After Photography," which opens this week, consists of publicity photographs, paparazzi pictures, magazine covers, tabloid front pages, movie trailers, TV clips, Web images, and celebrity-themed gewgaws. The exhibit will appall many people—MOMA putting the Spice Girls on the cover of its monthly bulletin? MOMA exhibiting press photos of Donald Trump chosen by Trump himself? But this is not merely a trendy gesture of the kind that makes conservatives despise the Guggenheim (the motorcycle show) and the Whitney (Yoko Ono). Rather, "Fame After Photography" can be seen as a kind of minor concordance to twentieth-century art, a core sample of the raw materials out of which Duchamp, Rauschenberg, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Warhol, and hundreds of other artists have created their work. In 1990, MOMA mounted its "High and Low" show, which displayed the vernacular inspirations for modern art alongside the canonical works. It seems apt that the decade is ending with a MOMA show entirely about Low.

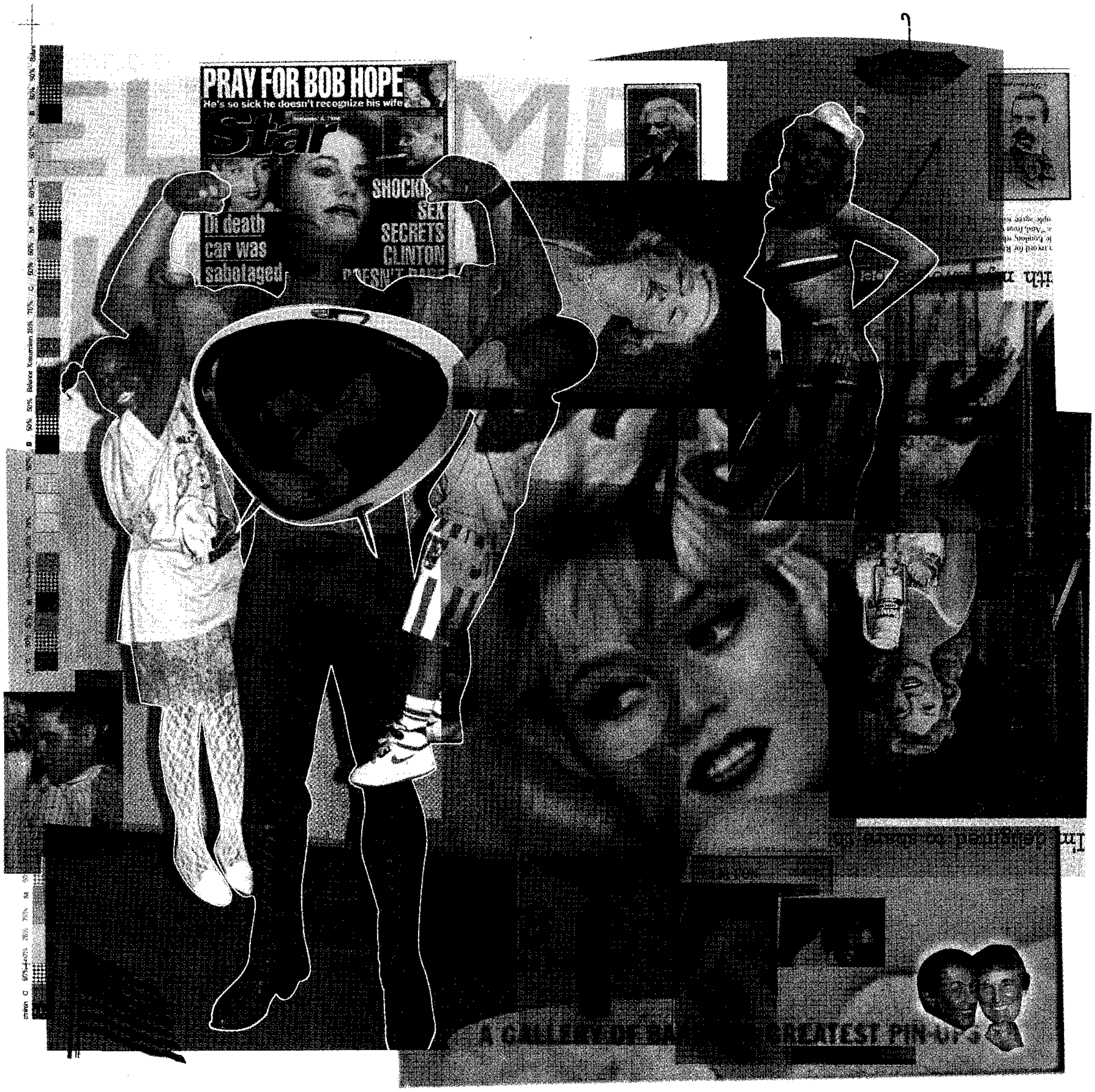
Despite the precedent of "High and Low," it is a little daring for this essentially conservative institution to put on a show for which it is so starkly unsuited. MOMA has wristwatches and coffeepots and cars in its permanent collection, of course, but those are just sexy expressions of its deep commitment to good taste, as opposed to the aggressively bad taste oozing through "Fame After Photography." Never before has MOMA officially sanctioned this much fun.

The exhibition space has been designed by Carole Kismaric and Marvin Heiferman, the guest curators, to blast the visitor from an uncrowded anteroom where he can sample the quiet, respectful fame of bygone ages (Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington, a bust of Mme. du Barry) slam-bang into a rude, manic, gleefully cheesy Times Square-like museumscape that charts the proliferation and evolution of popular culture: walls plastered with cheap pictures of the celebrated from George Sand to Farrah Fawcett; a vitrine containing a Joe DiMaggio Wheaties box; a video clip of Lucille Ball (as Lucy Ricardo) gawking at William Holden (as William Holden); Whitey Ford with Salvador Dali in a Braniff Airlines TV commercial. It is, as it should be, too much.

The show's actual Andy artifacts aside (Polaroids from which he created his silk-screened celebrity portraits during the seventies, and screen tests from the sixties, including one of the young Susan Sontag), Warhol is the de-facto godfather of this exhibit, its curator from beyond the grave. It was he who mocked and revelled in the idea of fame with homemade bad-movie "superstars"; he who wrote the most prescient epigram of the second half of the century ("In the future, everyone will be world-famous for fifteen minutes"); he who created the first high-end magazine, *Interview*, devoted entirely to celebrities. Unlike Warhol, however, Kismaric and Heiferman care about argument and history. Their big idea is that until the mid-nineteenth century renown was strictly a function of achievement or noble birth. Photography changed everything, by permitting the publication of "real" (as opposed to painted) portraits of the celebrated. For the first time, celebrity—its acquisition by the few, its contemplation by the masses—became a distinct commodity, an end in itself.

Wandering through this well-organized morass, you come to the reassuring yet depressing conclusion that the debasement of Western civilization did not, in fact, begin with the launch of *People* magazine, in 1974, or with television, a generation earlier. Instead, you learn that Americans have been celebrity-mad since the moment the daguerreotype was invented. (It probably isn't a coincidence that "celebrity," according to the O.E.D., became a generic noun during the eighteen-forties, photography's first decade.) The MOMA show includes hundreds of mass-produced photographs of the famous from the nineteenth century—tiny trading-card-like pictures and big newsprint pictures, stereopticon pictures and magazine pictures of the Buffalo Bills and the Sarah Bernhardts as well as the Charles Baudelaires and the Friedrich Nietzsches. We may find Bob Dole's shilling for Viagra unseemly, but in 1928 a photograph of Eleanor Roosevelt was used, with her permission, to sell Simmons mattresses. And one is reminded that Anne Frank, a cover girl for *Life* in 1958 (pictured beside an enlarged fragment of her diary prominently containing the word "Hollywood"), wouldn't have become the iconic Holocaust martyr if there had been no smiling photograph. Anne Frank and Twiggy, together here, presumably, for the first time. Fashion models are the ultimate photographic creatures, human beings valued exclusively for how they look in photographs. Starting at mid-century with the designation of "celebrity" models, the dissociation of fame from achievement that had begun in the last centur became insanely complete. The cultur was finally swallowing its own tail.

PHOTOGRAPHY'S great power derive from the presumption that picture making machines, unlike picturemakin artists, cannot lie. This is, of course, a li The great stage-managed campaign picture of Nancy Reagan waving at the giar live image of Ronnie in 1984 seems, i this exhibit, as sweetly fascistic as ever. A though Reagan's handlers refined and e ploited such photographic pseudo even as never before (and with much high stakes than, say, Joan Crawford at hon


PRAY FOR BOB HOPE
He's so sick he doesn't recognize his wife
Star
Di death car was sabotaged
SHOCKING SEX SECRETS CLINTON DOESN'T DARE
A GALLERY OF ... GREATEST PIN-UPS

In "Fame After Photography," MOMA puts cruddy mass-market flotsam on display.

retending to carve a roast turkey), the
how demonstrates that photo ops have
xisted all century long.

Looking at photographs of famous
rangers makes us feel close to those
mous strangers in a way that was im-
ossible before photographs existed. So
hotography has fuelled a long-running
emocratic hallucination, the delusion of
timacy with the celebrated. This blur
ow operates in the opposite direction
well, making the authentic look er-
tz. The color courtroom picture of
obert Downey, Jr., handcuffed and
ggard in an L.A. County Jail jump-
it, could be a still from a movie. And
en there is the white-Bronco chase
m 1994, the real-time cinéma-vérité
rformance of the age.

Given that a majority of the pictures
the MOMA show were staged, the spon-
eous images are the timeless and most compelling ones: the shots of John Profumo mid-scandal, J. P. Morgan yelling at reporters, and Lenny Bruce taking a swing at a photographer are like Walker Evans portraits in comparison with the picture of two black children suspended from the biceps of a grinning Hulk Hogan. Like anti-paparazzi photos, pictures of matadors being gored are the money shots in the world of bullfighting, too.

If photography convinces people, at some deep and unspoken level, that they are—almost—personal friends of the famous, photography's manic offspring, magazines and TV, have pressed Americans' noses even tighter against the glass. "Person to Person," the show hosted by Edward R. Murrow in the fifties, marked broadcast journalism's first big slide down the slippery slope of celebrity fixation. (In the clip that MOMA runs, the singer Julie London tells Murrow that her record company spent more time shooting her album-cover photo than it spent recording the songs.) The most successful new American magazine, *In Style*, may be the apotheosis of the country's hundred-and-sixty-year-long pretend-to-touch-the-celebrity tease. A spinoff of *People*, the magazine is essentially a how-to manual for regular Americans who want to get the same haircut and wear the same boots, hang the same curtains and eat the same salads as their favorite celebrities—to become celebrities, except for the rich-and-famous part.

Inevitably, and a little disconcertingly, "Fame After Photography" indulges the madness as well as chronicles it. The show's final image is a blown-up still from "La Dolce Vita": a pack of life-size paparazzi aiming their huge 1960 cameras at "you." One wonders, Are the museum visitors poring over the dozens of pictures of Jackie Onassis and Charles Lindbergh having a fundamentally different experience from readers of the *National Enquirer*? It's closer to fact than metaphor to consider the stylized celebrity media, the *In Styles* and *Us* magazines, as forms of sexless pornography.

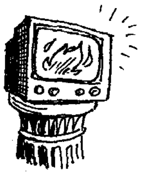
Does democracy plus prosperity plus cameras equal . . . this? "Fame After Photography" can be seen as a story of America's self-expulsion from a pre-photographic Eden. The camera, just a marvellous piece of new technology, was the vehicle for our passage toward the pathological pride and idolatry of our media culture. Today, we're crazy for another new technological marvel, the Internet. Maybe at a museum show a century from now our great-great-grandchildren will chuckle and cringe at the transformation of culture—who could've predicted?—that the Internet has wrought. ♦

ON TELEVISION

NETWORKING

A new show that yearns for TV as it used to be.

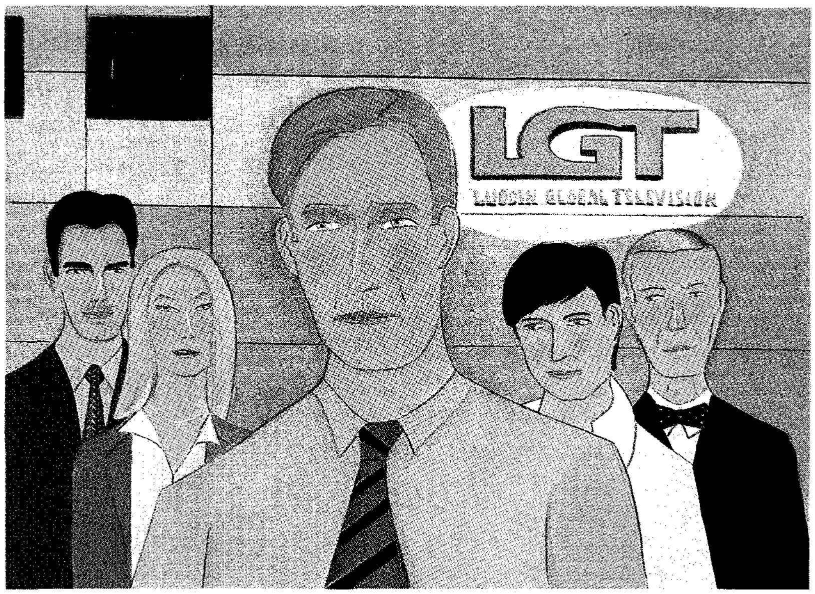
BY NANCY FRANKLIN



A PRESS release for the new Showtime series "Beggars and Choosers" calls the show an "affectionate satire" of the network-TV business, and there's your problem right there, Mister. A satire that sets out to be affectionate is a watered-down, cautious satire, which is to say that it is no longer satire at all. "Beggars and Choosers" wants to be seen as "smart"—as the insider's insider—but it also wants too much to be loved. The main character is Rob Malone (Brian Kerwin), the head of programming for a network called Luddin Global Television, and he's presented as a guy whose heart is in the right place. In bed one evening with his wife, Cecile (Isabella Hoffmann), he says, reflecting on the difficult time he's having at work, "Remember when I left Yale and I wanted to be a playwright?" Yes, his wife recalls; he wanted to be a new Clifford Odets. Malone goes on, "I wanted to do something important." His wife assures him, "You *are* doing something important. . . . You're running a network." Considering that "Beggars and Choosers" is being shown on cable, home of everything the traffic will allow, it has a peculiarly muted, edgeless feel to it. The characters run to stereotypes: an avid, empty agent; scheming executives; a murderous, languid-lidded Russian mobster; an eccentric and mercurial billionaire. And the inside-show-biz bits are mostly ones that everybody outside show biz—if there is anyone left outside show biz since Robert Altman's "The Player" appeared—has been in on for some time.

An epigraph by Brandon Tartikoff, who, with Peter Lefcourt, created the show, was displayed at the beginning of the series to explain the title and to convey to the viewer just what a whimsical and compelling creature the television business is. It consists, we are told, of the people who have the fantasies and the people who have the power to make those fantasies into a reality: the beggars and the choosers. Tartikoff's quote goes on, "There are three kinds of choosers. Those who see the glass as half full. Those who see it as half empty. And those who ask—does it have to be a glass?" This is supposed to provoke a chuckle in the viewer, and also to foster an appreciation for those who courageously fight the good fight for creative freedom in the face of arbitrary, idiotic intervention from "suits." It's a formulation that relies for its charm on our lack of familiarity with the wacky world of network television programming. But that cherry was popped a long time ago, and the fellow who popped it was Brandon Tartikoff himself.

Tartikoff, who died two years ago, at the age of forty-eight, was a television-industry wunderkind. In 1980, when he was thirty-one, he was named head of programming at NBC, and within a few years he had established NBC's killer Thursday-night lineup (it included "The Cosby Show," "Cheers," "Family Ties," and "L.A. Law") and brought the network out of the basement. From an early age, Tartikoff seems to have "got" television, the way Einstein as a small child "got" that he was displacing air molecules when he walked into a room. According to one obituary, when Tartikoff was ten he told his parents that he thought Jay North was miscast as Dennis the Menace. It wouldn't have occurred to most ten-year-olds—at leas then, in 1959—that anything on TV was the result of somebody's having made a decision about it (let alone a bad decision). While he was at NBC, Tartikoff became, if not a household name



The cast of "Beggars and Choosers," one of Brandon Tartikoff's final projects.

GEOFFREY PARKER

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a media darling. (He's the only network executive who ever hosted "Saturday Night Live.") His career at NBC increased our awareness of what went into the TV business; vague notions that people might have had about "working in TV" were replaced by specific ambitions of becoming the next Brandon Tartikoff. He paved the way for Hollywood to become the kiddie pool that it is today: Garth Ancier, who now has Tartikoff's old job at NBC, was twenty-eight when he was made the head of programming at Fox in the late eighties.

"Beggars and Choosers," whose executive producer is Tartikoff's widow, Lilly Tartikoff, is essentially a tribute to its late co-creator. And there are parallels aplenty between him and Rob Malone. For starters, Tartikoff, too, went to Yale. He had a reputation for being well liked and uncynical, and Malone, with his Andy Hardy-era ideals, certainly qualifies as uncynical. Tartikoff also had a reputation for competitiveness; when the controversy aroused by one of LGT's shows—a program about a bunch of guys who go back to nature, à la Thoreau, and renounce modern ways (they actually make a pyre of microwave ovens and cell phones)—lands it on the cover of *TV Guide*, Malone proudly says, "Showtime's *never* made the cover." During Tartikoff's early days at NBC, some of the shows that eventually became huge hits were not initially successful, and his strategy was to give them time to catch on. Likewise, Malone, whose network's ratings stink, decides to stick with "Mountainmen"; while he's in a meeting with his colleagues, his face suddenly lights up, and he says, "You know something, this just might work. Let's give it a shot. Look, when you're in last place you gotta take some chances."

For all its supposed glamour, TV is a reactive business. The choosers who run the networks and the studios may have all the power, but they need what the beggars have to offer in order to exercise it. Malone is a man caught in the middle; he feels he spends his days balancing the demands of his boss and those of the creative talent and their handlers, and the friction seems to result not in creative tension but in tension headaches.

In Malone's personal life, things are just as fraught: Cecile, who's about to turn forty, wants to have another baby, while their twenty-one-year-old daughter, Audrey (Keegan Tracy), is sleeping with a forty-year-old actor whose series is the one bright spot in LGT's lineup and who is hitting up the network for a huge salary increase. Even as Malone is having breakfast, his pool boy nudges him about reading a script, which he says has ABC "salivating." Ah, the pool boy: it will come as something less than a surprise to viewers that he is played by the world's most famous real-life pool boy—Kato Kaelin, who wears a shirt with the words "As Seen on TV" on the front. Not that long ago, putting a Kato Kaelin on TV would have been unthinkable; now it seems inevitable. First, I tsk-tsked, and then it dawned on me that if I were casting the part of pool boy I would certainly wonder, even if only in passing, whether I could get Kato Kaelin. There is something undeniably (albeit minimally) amusing about such bald obviousness. You know it will be mentioned by TV reviewers, and it will probably merit a spot on one of the many entertainment-news shows. But good publicity doesn't equal good television

"Beggars and Choosers," in addition to being a tribute to Tartikoff, is a memorial to an idea of the way television used to be, or to an idea of the way the world used to be. One morning at breakfast when Malone's teen-age son turns o the TV to get the news, Malone suggests that he read the paper instead "The newspaper is a dinosaur medium the lunkheaded lad says. "Beggars an Choosers," though it is set in the up-to-date world of TV, is a dinosaur, too—it's behind the curve in every importa respect. I imagine this show is aime at soon-to-be dinosaurs—the bab boomers of Tartikoff's generation. B the boomers in the show are unre How many forty-two-year-old Ya graduates have twenty-one-year-o daughters? (Kerwin is actually just shy fifty, and his character's world vie seems to be that of Robert Young "Father Knows Best.") Malone's w would have had to be a teen-ager wh their daughter was born, and how ma Yale grads Malone's age had ch brides? While this series seems to lam the passing of values that suppose used to prevail in television (but w often just the expedient standards a practices of their day), its own grasp history is careless. In a scene that is supposed to show how young people d know anything anymore, Malone tells his daughter that an idea she's pitching to him is similar to the plot of the movie "Adam's Rib." She has no idea what he's talking about. He says, smugly, "1949. R.K.O. Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy." Not so fast, Malone—by 1949, Tracy and Hepburn had been M-G-M fixtures for years, and "Adam's Rib," in addition to being an M-G-M picture, is an M-G-M *kind* of picture. Any head of network programming should know this. If I were his boss, I'd see to it that Malone was stripped of his parking spot. ♦

MUSICAL EVENTS

GODS AND PRANKSTERS

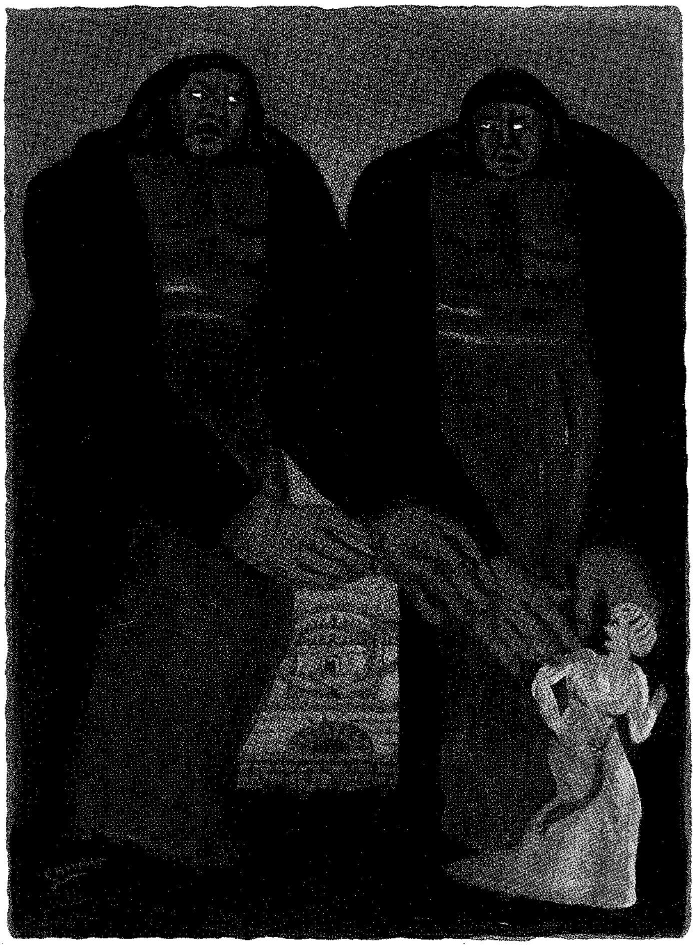
Wagner shrouds San Francisco; Finns frolic in Ojai.

BY ALEX ROSS

I HEARD Wagner's "Ring des Nibelungen" twice last month: once at the San Francisco Opera, and once in a car, while driving from Los Angeles to San Francisco, by way of Death Valley. I had just seen an exuberant, even zany festival of new Finnish music in Ojai, in a valley of the Sierra Madre, and I thought I should adjust my senses for the descent into Wagner's world. "Das Rheingold" came on as I drove into he desert, and I was again mazed by Wagner's knack or catching all experience n his web. The booming E-flat Major of the Rhine, which should have been an nlikely accompaniment to he bone-dry expanse all round, made the landscape eave in watery waves. The mirage was instantaneous nd total. It was a version of hat Oscar Wilde described "The Decay of Lying": e need of art to rewrite life. The world has become sad ecause a puppet was once elancholy," Wilde wrote of amlet. Wagner was mak- g an ocean of the Mojave.

THE mind is easily tricked by Wagner's il- ions. They change what see onstage; they fill the gaps of any ramshackle staging. Directors struggle to create spectacles that are commensurate with the grandeur of the score, but they often create images that are redundant rather than resonant. The well-worn Otto Schenk production at the Met, for example, is caught in a paradox: the more impressive its images become, the more they box in the billowing hugeness of the music. In progressive stagings, the images are studiously distant from Wagner's libretto, and his art of transformation can be felt to stunning effect. Yet there always comes a point when the music goes against the grain of the directorial idea, and the magic breaks. As I tried to put a Wagnerian soundtrack to the California desert, for example, I realized that certain particulars would never fit: Wagner could compose the mountains and the sand but not the sport-utility vehicles. Playing the "Ring" in my car, I was fashioning a kind of miniature European conceptual production. It was fun for me; it would have been less fun for a paying audience in a bus. Such, however, is the self-indulgence that highly paid directors are allowed on world stages.

Wasn't the power of Wagner at its height when the machinery of opera houses was more rudimentary—when carpenters made desperate, ingenious efforts to meet the composer's insanely ambitious specifications? This, I think, is the guiding spirit of the San Francisco "Ring," which was originally conceived by Nikolaus Lehnhoff, designed by John Conklin, first mounted between 1983 and 1985, and heavily revised for the current revival, by the director Andrei Serban. I didn't attend the earlier stagings, but a look at the reviews suggests that Serban has thrown out many heavy-handed touches—the fire god Loge walking around with a *Wall Street Journal*, for example. What is left, essentially, is a conservative, storybook affair of gods, giants, dwarfs, and humans, with intermittent intrusions of nineteenth-century décor and twentieth-century abstraction. Although the doomed tribe of Gibichungs sit on elegant bourgeois furniture, and the interior of Valhalla has an airy Mediterranean look, this "Ring" basically takes place in the mythic, Nordic dimension. The giants are sixteen-foot-tall monster puppets, and the dragon is an



The giants Fasolt and Fafner threaten Freia in San Francisco's storybook production of the "Ring."

enormous gold-encrusted head that bobs this way and that. No effort was made to hide the mechanics of the giants: you could see the puppeteers scurrying around them. And the imagination worked to cover the artifice. This production dared to have a sense of adventure and fun

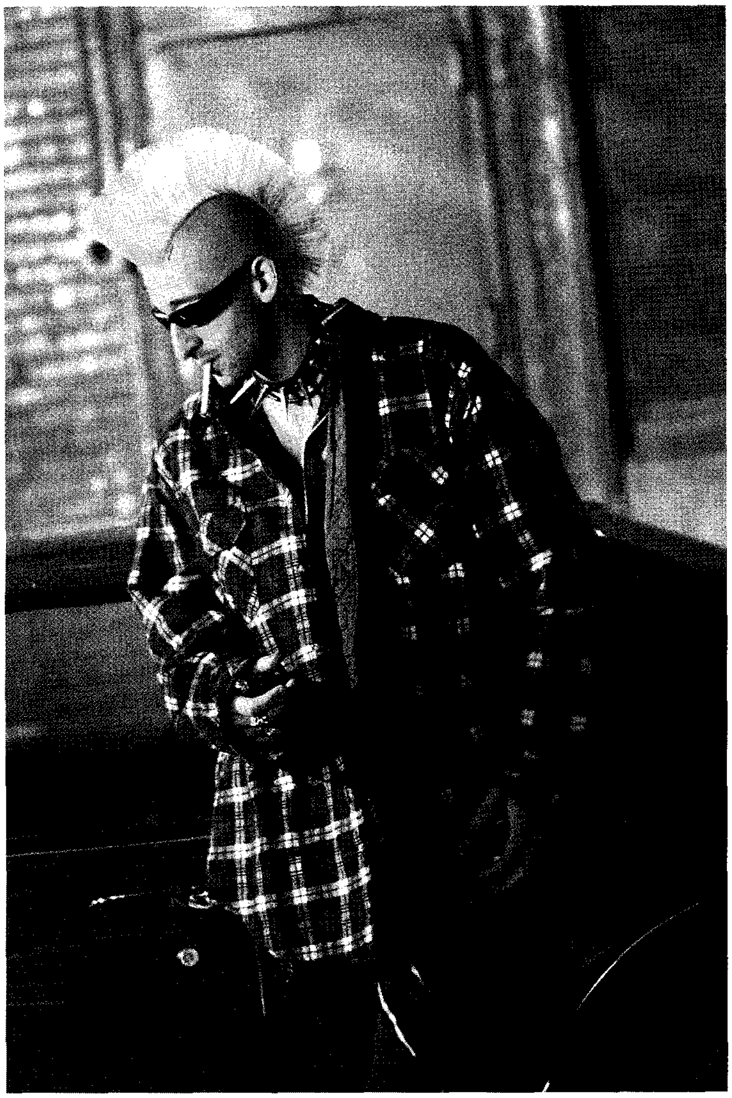
It was also, at its best, a sophisticated reading of the gods' long decline. Wotan emerged a somewhat feebler and more suspect figure than the flawed titan who is described in Wagner's score. James Morris sang the role with his customary beauty and solidity of tone, but he invested relatively little energy in the performance until just before his exit, when he railed against the naïve bravado of his grandson Siegfried. So the emphasis shifted to the dwarf lord, Alberich, and the change turned out to be dramatically provocative. Tom Fox, as Alberich, sang with such a bold, clear tone and unleashed his curse on the ring with such righteous passion that he very nearly became the moral center of the opera. His denunciation of Wotan hit home: "Thief, do you cast on me the guilt for what you so ecstatically wished to do?" The gods, as in so many modern productions, are a greedy, bitchy bunch, but Lehnhoff and Serban ingeniously disguised their revisionist notions in traditional "Ring" imagery. When the gods entered Valhalla, they walked across an honest-to-goodness Rainbow Bridge while an ominous fog lapped at their feet. Donald Runnicles, whose conducting found a good balance between the broad and the brisk, gave a tellingly fierce edge to the triumphal entrance music.

As usual, Wagner's music proved ambiguous enough to cover alterations in the moral hierarchy. Beneath his well-known system of leitmotifs is a murkier assortment of signature chords and intervals, which blend seemingly disparate characters together. There is, for example, the tritone—the old diabolical interval of medieval music—which weaves its way through the leitmotifs of Wotan, Alberich, the dragon Fafner, and the half-human, half-Nibelung Hagen. (The descending scale that represents Wotan's spear covers a tritone in the final segment of its plunge.) What do these characters have in common? They crave the ring. Alberich is right: he and Wotan are playing the same game. Hagen, evil as he is, attains a quasi-heroic tone because he is working valiantly to win back the ring that his father Alberich stole fair and square. The fundamental grayness of the "Ring"—and especially of "Götterdämmerung"—sets the cycle apart from Wagner's other creations, which strove through darkness to affirmation.

It was, however, in "Götterdämmerung" that the San Francisco production began to sag. Problems had already cropped up in "Siegfried": Wolfgang Schmidt delivered his usual brutish, anti-lyrical, borderline-moronic interpretation, and Jane Eaglen sang Brünnhilde without the awesome power she has unveiled on other occasions. Her immolation scene was regal and well-nigh perfect—all the big notes were there, and also the softer trills and turns—but you had little sense of the agony through which she had to pass. (Eaglen had been suffering from a cold, and she was replaced in "Die Walküre" by Frances Ginzer; this young soprano overcame her obvious nervousness to sing Act III with a promisingly pure and polished voice.) The other principals in "Götterdämmerung" were not ideal. Alan Held, an elegant bass-baritone, never seemed to find a consistent personality for Gunther; Kristine Ciesinski wobbled wimpishly as Gutrune; Schmidt carried on his ham-fisted-boy act; and Eric Halfvarson sang Hagen with a somehow too neat and focussed bass. Hagen is no slithering Svengali, as this production suggested, but a decadent hero, the anti-Siegfried. He should whip up murder with his voice.

There were, in truth, only a few moments here and there when the singers seemed to be pouring their hearts out. Foremost in this respect was Tom Fox, with that hair-raising curse. Fox is an intelligent, musical, and physically brilliant performer, as various appearances in San Francisco have shown, and he should appear more often in New York. Deborah Voigt, as Sieglinde, charged the air as she sailed effortlessly through her great high turns (*"O hehrstes Wunder!"*). Elena Zaremba, navigating a large wobble, brought weird, dire energy to her scenes as the unearthly Erda. Mark Baker, as Siegmund, sometimes had trouble being heard (the expansion of the stage during the recent renovations of the San Francisco house seems to have taken some support away from the singers), but he gave his big statements an accurate punch. And Morris, who was too often neutral in these performances, did make the most of his searing inward scenes in "Walküre." He sang his farewell to Brünnhilde in what seemed to be a deliberately constricted voice, as if even at this crucial instant the confident but ambivalent god could not deliver himself of his feelings. The "Ring" is said to be a story of redemption through love, but in fact it has relatively few moments of real, spontaneous tenderness. Wotan comforts Brünnhilde only as he sends her away. His affection for her comes to the surface for precisely one minute. Then the door in his mind swings shut.

WAGNER invented the idea of the summer festival, but Ojai turned out to be the most un-Wagnerian experience imaginable. The event is an end-of-season jamboree for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and each year it has a different music director. On this occasion, Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Philharmonic's conductor, took over the reins, and brought with him a merry band of Finns—the Toimii Ensemble, a legendary avant-garde chamber group, which seldom performs in public but is held together by long-standing friendship. Salonen was in a boisterous mood: I can't think of another director of a major orchestra who would feel so free to make a fool of himself—*intentionally, at least*—in public. Toimii put on a children's concert, called Toimii Goes Opera, in which the performers made an atonal mess of the "Ruslan and Lyud-mila" overture, hopped around in bunny suits, and pulled off bits of business tha would have pleased both Spike Jone and Jacques Tati. There was some seriou work on display, too: Magnus Lindberg new Cello Concerto, steeped in lush Sibelian chords, and Salonen's ow "Five Images After Sappho," which wa sparked by clean, winsome, and vaguel pop vocal writing. The main event of th weekend, Lindberg's 1985 masterpiec "Kraft," moved thrillingly between ful orchestral onslaughts and impressioni tic smatterings of sound. Members Toimii ran up and down the aisles bang on auto parts and strike gon suspended from trees. If Wagner sa the summer festival as the last wo in sacral solemnity, Salonen made a high comedy of the here and now



'rien Brody as Ritchie, the neighborhood scapegoat, on the set of "Summer of Sam."

THE CURRENT CINEMA

OVERHEATED

pike Lee's summer in the Italian Bronx, "Wild Wild West," and "American Pie."

BY DAVID DENBY

IN a sordid room somewhere, a madman howls on his bed while a black Labrador barks endlessly in the yard bew. A bit later, the lunatic, pacing the eets, walks up to anonymous single omen or to couples making out in rked cars and plugs them with a .44 olver. "Summer of Sam," Spike Lee's ovie about murder and New York ziness, has an amoral tabloid kick to Lee, working from a script originated by the actor-writers Michael Imperioli and Victor Colicchio, makes no attempt to understand the psychotic killer David Berkowitz—the man known as Son of Sam, who claimed he was taking orders from a dog, and who terrorized the city in the summer of 1977. Lee is interested in something else—in harsh sensation, in the shock of luridness, and in death so arbitrary that it is almost a joke. But, as the blood washes against the windows of the cars, some of us may feel queasy. Lee distances us from Berkowitz, and from his victims, too. The murders in "Summer of Sam" are just gruesome spectacle.

The distanced treatment may be Lee's way of admitting that this particular killer—an ugly, overweight screamer who leaves cake on the table for flies to feast on—is hopeless as dramatic material. But, if that's the case, why make the movie? The answer is that for Lee and his collaborators the insanity of David Berkowitz exists everywhere in New York. We are all David Berkowitz—or so the movie suggests. Most of "Summer of Sam" is set among a group of Italian-Americans in the Bronx. As the summer gets hotter and hotter, the young men of the neighborhood—louts and hangers-on who gather at a street marked "Dead End"—decide that they can catch the killer themselves. Macho madness sends blood rushing to their heads and drives out common sense; they turn on one of their own—Ritchie (Adrien Brody), who left the Bronx and came back as a bisexual punk rocker with a Mohawk hairdo.

Spike Lee has often thrown charged and ambiguous material onto the screen and then struggled, and failed, to resolve the tensions he has set up. No one could say that his work is dead, or that he has ever been cynical and merely commercial, but "Summer of Sam" is enraging—joltingly vital but too imprecise to mean much of anything. Even the best things in it leave us hanging. For instance, the filmmakers put together a brilliant portrait of a desperate little stud, Vinny (John Leguizamo), hairdresser and disco king, who is unhappily married to the neighborhood beauty, Dionna (Mira Sorvino). Vinny is embarrassed by sex with his wife, whom he expects to be pure, and he acts out his sexual fantasies—which Dionna would be happy to satisfy—with women all over the neighborhood. Leguizamo, in a vibrant, detailed performance, allows these Madonna-whore confusions to pour out of his nervous smile and his hyperactive body. But in the movie's odd dramatic scheme Vinny's hangups are made to bear too much weight. It's not enough that his neuroses threaten his marriage; his weakness also leads to the persecution of Ritchie, who is his friend, and who needs, and fails to get, Vinny's protection against the neighborhood jerks. Poor Vinny betrays everyone, but the filmmakers don't see that he's a victim himself—the heir to an old Italian-Catholic quandary. In any case, how can all this serve as an analogy to the madness of David Berkowitz? If Vinny's sexual confusion leads to chaos, it's a very different kind of chaos from the one caused by Berkowitz. And, if one kind of insanity is conditioned by culture and history, the other is a neurological aberration. Bringing them together seems arbitrary and pointless.

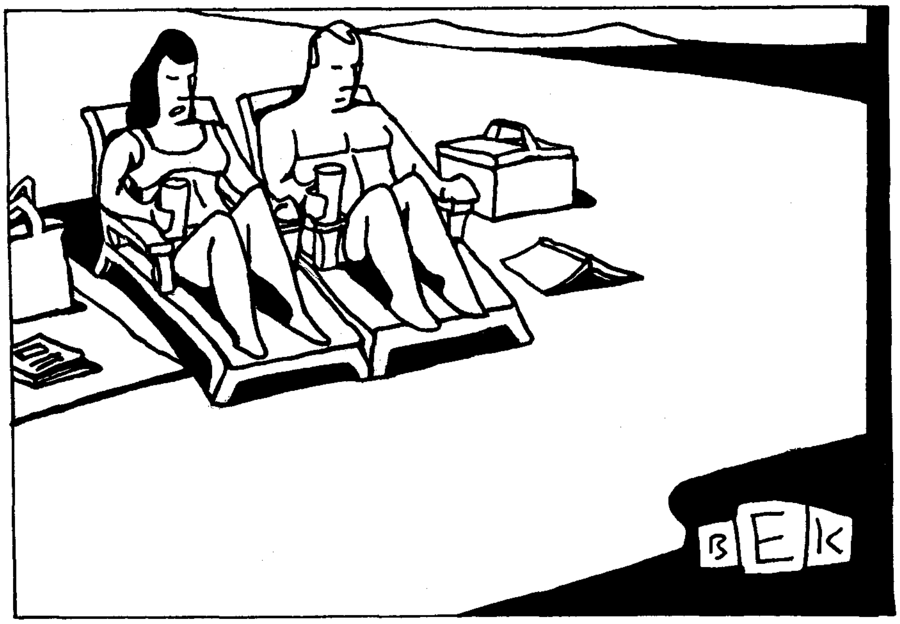
In that roiling summer, as Spike Lee tells it, everyone was seeking pleasure (disco and punk had just come in) and finding death. As the movie whirls through emotions of anger, lust, and fear, Lee bangs sequences together in rough montage. But is he getting at something unique about the summer of 1977, or is he just expressing his own restlessness—his desire, as a filmmaker, to see lots of things exploding on the screen at once? Lee likes a rough surface, and he uses two cameras, at different angles, to film dialogue sequences that are partly improvised. One such sequence—a furious argument between Leguizamo and Sorvino—takes off like a rocket, but much of the movie consists of Italian-American men standing around and dully cursing at one another, and the material seems worked up not so much from life or the immediate situation as from other movies. In "Summer of Sam," Lee tries to out-Scorsese Scorsese. But his scenes don't have the organic shape—the relationship of calm to noise, of reflection to temper—that Scorsese gives his. Lee uses Italian excitability as a mere convention, and the movie wears you down: not one of these jabbering men, apart from a neighborhood crime boss (Ben Gazzara), seems to have an I.Q. over eighty. It's as if Spike Lee were saying that New Yorkers are too stupid not to kill one another.

"WILD WILD WEST," a hugely expensive action-spoof directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, has all the wrong kind of energy. Based vaguely on a sixties TV series, the movie is set in 1869, during the Grant Administration, and it features a kind of Erector-set futurism—a celebration of machine-age science fiction, as in a Jules Verne novel, complete with flying machines, giant battle wagons, Gatlings, gizmos, and wrought-iron whatnots. Some of the retro industrial design is handsome, and a few of the devices are neat, but they appear in the movie hard and fast, without preparation, and they have less effect than the gadgets in the Bond movies. No individual thing, person, or emotion registers in this frenzy of whimsicality. The camera rushes toward characters or flees from them; people fall through trapdoors, get bopped on the head with mallets, drop out of oil paintings. Virtually every shot has some sort of trick in it, and after the movie has turned thirty or so tricks, who cares? As an audience, we are not receiving love; we are being worked over.

The movie has something to do with a legless madman, Dr. Arliss Loveless (Kenneth Branagh), who wants to destroy the United States, and the two federal agents—James West (Will Smith), an impulsively violent cowboy, and Artemus Gordon (Kevin Kline), a dandified inventor-detective—who try to stop him. Six writers labored on this stuff; they produced a story so fanciful and impersonal that it has to be explained over and over, and dialogue that combines baroque insults with racial and sexual innuendo. Only a pop culture corrupted by easily wasted millions could have yielded up anything so senseless—an overweening opulence of American-Victorian leather and glass and fully costumed, fully breasted women with names like Munitia and Amazonia.

Still, "Wild Wild West" is not likely to be as big a commercial disappointment as "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen" and "Hudson Hawk" and other disasters of the action-spoof category. It has a great title song and it has Will Smith, who is all movie star. Smith looks sexy in his Western clothes, and his self-regard keeps him afloat, while Kevin Kline, putting on airs and raising his chin, dances his way through his part. Both men are funny, but the tension created between their opposed characters—man of action, man of reflection—is halfhearted, so there's no suspense built into the question of hov each one's specialty is going to save th other in moments of danger. The actor will survive, but one wonders about Barr Sonnenfeld. In the past, working wit good writers, he always had somethin smart he wanted to bring out—th paranoia of Hollywood in "Get Shorty, the chic wit of mordancy in the "Addam Family" pictures. In "Men in Black" h mixed the human and the creaturely i ways that were not only funny bu provocatively funny. After that fil Sonnenfeld seemed to many of us like hipster who could keep his cool inta even in a big-budget spectacle. But w may have been wrong: Breasts that sho out flames are a schmuck's idea of hum

IN the best sequence in "Americ Pie," the new teen comedy about s and embarrassment, Jim (Jason Bigg a horny high-school boy, allows a bea tiful foreign-exchange student to chan her clothes in his room. Unaware th Jim has left a little camera running, t girl undresses, and then, aroused by Ji dirty magazines, which she finds n his bed, she commits various indisc



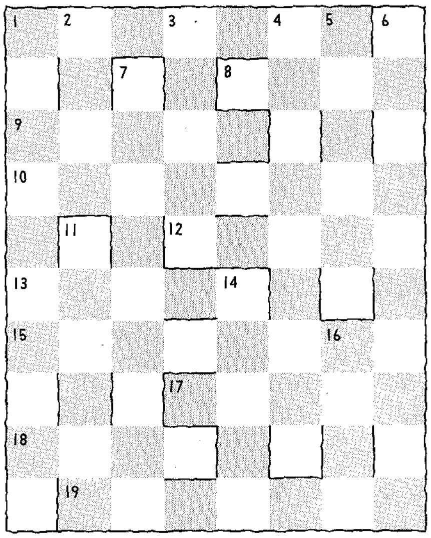
"This is perfect. I could stay like this for the next five seconds."

tions. Voyeurism runs rampant: the scene is picked up by the camera and sent over the Net to half the students in the school. Everyone watches gleefully, and so do we, with whatever traces of shame. But then Jim, hoping to join the action, goes back to his room and tries to throw his shirt over the camera, only to get broadcast himself as catastrophes overcome him. Jim's misadventures turn semi-porn into banana-peel comedy, and that's the redeeming strategy of the movie, which is raunchy, malicious, undistinguished in style, but generally funny. In this high school, the seniors who are still virgins are obsessed with ending their disgrace, and everyone knows what's happening to everyone else. The boys compare notes, and the girls tell each other stories, too—the tories become like punctuation. Adam Herz, the writer, and the team of Paul nd Chris Weitz (the first directs, the econd produces) seem to be saying that or teens the true performance is the elling, not the acts, which are mostly a hambling disaster.

"American Pie" is very coarse, and ultural historians will no doubt record it s another way station in the collapse of merican taste. It is my duty to report, or instance, that semen, the magic subance, here continues its triumphal voyge, begun in "There's Something About Mary," from hard-core to aboveground ms. Yet the gross-out jokes are harmss enough; they could even be regarded spice in a movie that believes, in the nd, in true love. What "American Pie" trays is not good taste but any notion at privacy could matter to these kids to us. Everything in this picture is out ont: whatever humiliates the characs most is precisely what everyone in e school learns about them, and the ovie views this as proper and humane. r we are all swimming in the same up of confusion and embarrassment, yeurism and malice. But without ne feeling for privacy as a value, a ovie about teen sex and romance can't ssibly be made with any grace or le. The idea that everyone should ow everything, however productive of nedy, links the movie to the kind of time talk show in which neighbor- od friends betray one another's ses and the audience howls at them in ck disapproval and open pleasure. e new hit comedies make us join that ience, whether we want to or not. ♦

8 x 10 CRYPTIC

NO. 95 BY TRIP PAYNE



ACROSS

1 In Madrid, like a bridge? (7)
8 Figure without delay in a hospital (4)
9 A deli counter was in bad shape (5)
10 Fuel is not refined in spring (5,3)
12 Orchestra conductor's two notes (5)
13 Search globe for jazz band (5)
15 Enhancing the appearance of character ending season in "Loving" (8)
17 Underage gold digger gets a hearing (5)
18 Always head off high body temperature (4)
19 Stuck supplement on the outside of this place (7)

DOWN

1 Dazed person resolved gripping step with heel (5,5)
2 Two people beginning to play song (4)
3 Requires massages, so it's said (5)
4 Carol lies about ugly beast walking (9)
5 What nuns wear helps to make church a bit solemn (6)
6 Old city on the Volga getting tasteless premiere of radio commercial (10)
7 Federation keeps oaf bewildered (9)
11 Leave prima donna lady who exposed herself (6)
14 French resort supports band that's assured of success (2,3)
16 Letter is not excellent (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 94 appears on page 34. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

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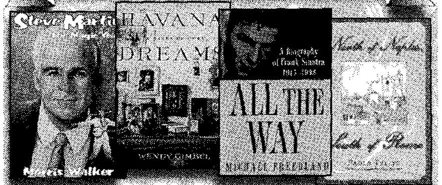

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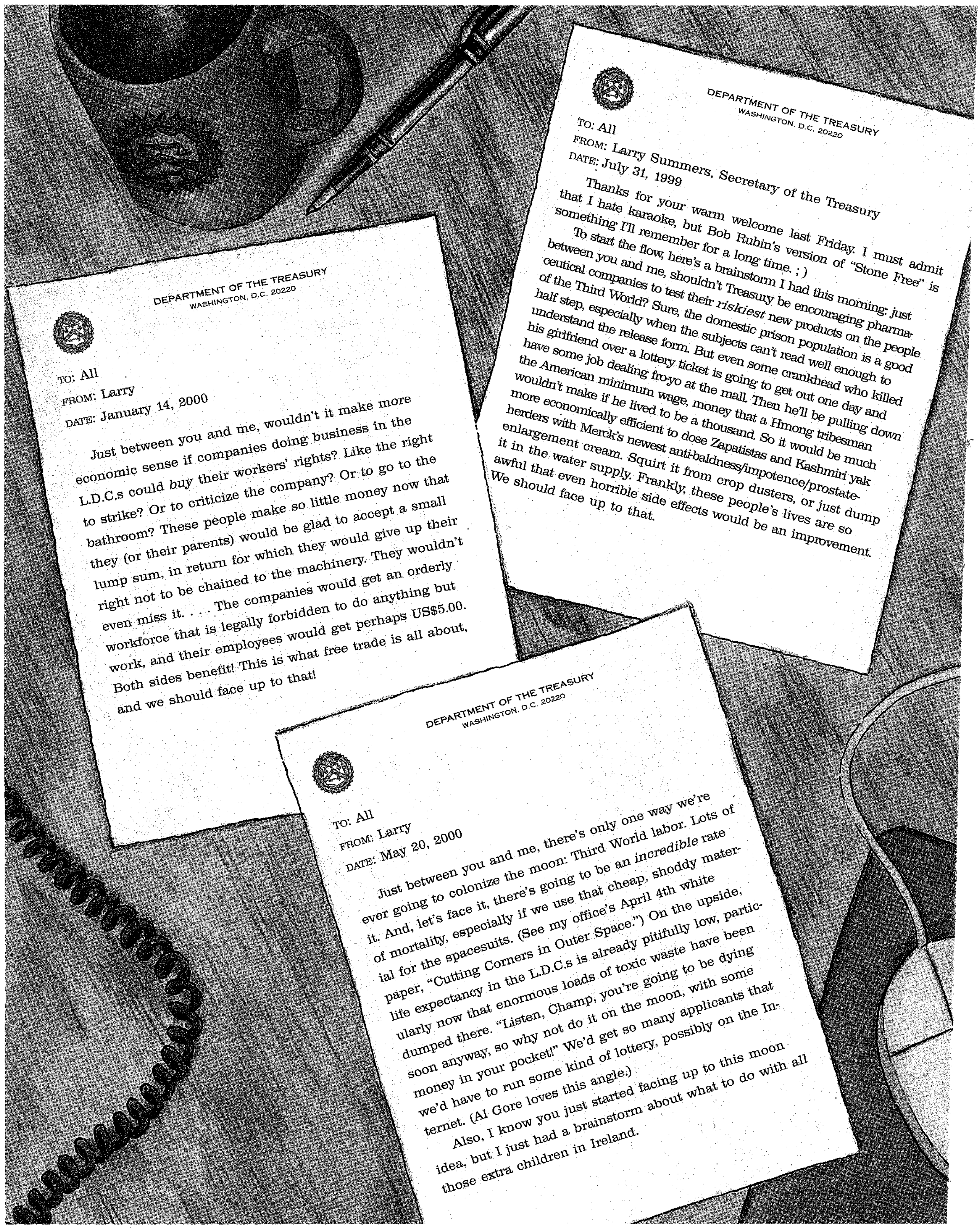
THE BACK PAGE BY MICHAEL GERBER AND JONATHAN SCHWARZ

Just between you and me, shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging *more* migration of the dirty industries to the L.D.C.s [Less Developed Countries]? . . . A given amount of health-impairing pollution should be done in the country with the lowest cost. . . . I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that.—*December, 1991, memo from Larry Summers, then chief economist for the World Bank, as reported in the Times.*



DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20220

TO: All
FROM: Larry Summers, Secretary of the Treasury
DATE: July 31, 1999

Thanks for your warm welcome last Friday. I must admit that I hate karaoke, but Bob Rubin's version of "Stone Free" is something I'll remember for a long time. ;)

To start the flow, here's a brainstorm I had this morning: just between you and me, shouldn't Treasury be encouraging pharmaceutical companies to test their *riskiest* new products on the people of the Third World? Sure, the domestic prison population is a good half step, especially when the subjects can't read well enough to understand the release form. But even some crankhead who killed his girlfriend over a lottery ticket is going to get out one day and have some job dealing fro-yo at the mall. Then he'll be pulling down the American minimum wage, money that a Hmong tribesman wouldn't make if he lived to be a thousand. So it would be much more economically efficient to dose Zapatistas and Kashmiri yak herders with Merck's newest anti-baldness/impotence/prostate-enlargement cream. Squirt it from crop dusters, or just dump it in the water supply. Frankly, these people's lives are so awful that even horrible side effects would be an improvement. We should face up to that.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20220

TO: All
FROM: Larry
DATE: January 14, 2000

Just between you and me, wouldn't it make more economic sense if companies doing business in the L.D.C.s could *buy* their workers' rights? Like the right to strike? Or to criticize the company? Or to go to the bathroom? These people make so little money now that they (or their parents) would be glad to accept a small lump sum, in return for which they would give up their right not to be chained to the machinery. They wouldn't even miss it. . . . The companies would get an orderly workforce that is legally forbidden to do anything but work, and their employees would get perhaps US$5.00. Both sides benefit! This is what free trade is all about, and we should face up to that!

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20220

TO: All
FROM: Larry
DATE: May 20, 2000

Just between you and me, there's only one way we're ever going to colonize the moon: Third World labor. Lots of it. And, let's face it, there's going to be an *incredible* rate of mortality, especially if we use that cheap, shoddy material for the spacesuits. (See my office's April 4th white paper, "Cutting Corners in Outer Space.") On the upside, life expectancy in the L.D.C.s is already pitifully low, particularly now that enormous loads of toxic waste have been dumped there. "Listen, Champ, you're going to be dying soon anyway, so why not do it on the moon, with some money in your pocket!" We'd get so many applicants that we'd have to run some kind of lottery, possibly on the Internet. (Al Gore loves this angle.)

Also, I know you just started facing up to this moon idea, but I just had a brainstorm about what to do with all those extra children in Ireland.

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